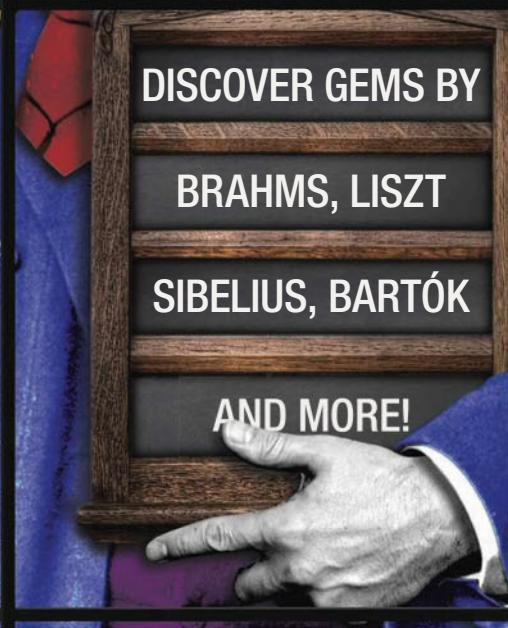
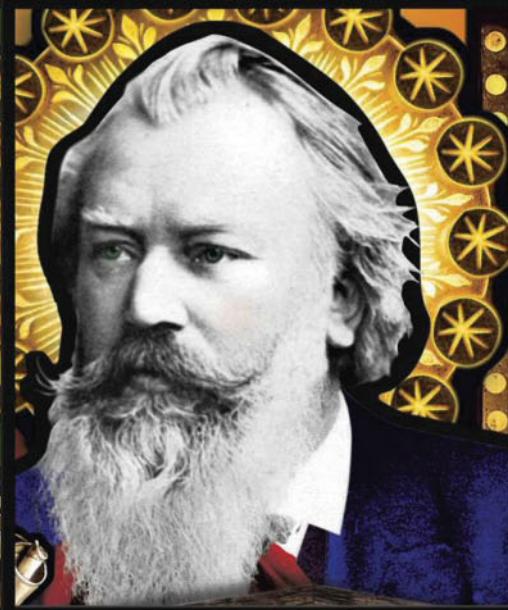
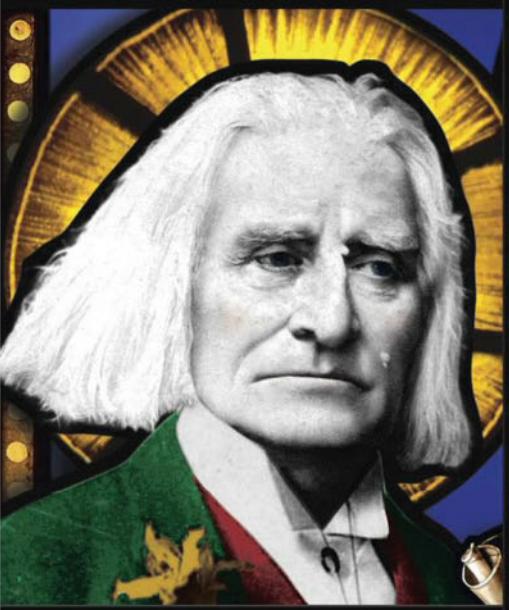


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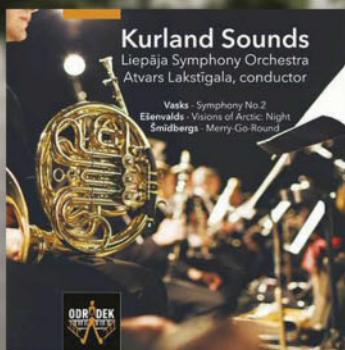
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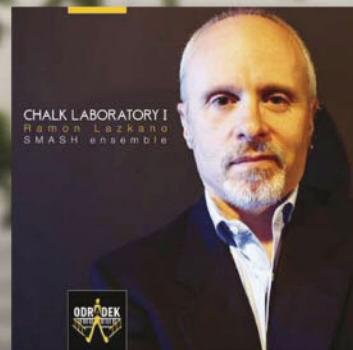


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THE MONTH IN MUSIC

The recordings, concerts, broadcasts and websites exciting us this Christmas

ON STAGE Bleat Midwinter

There'll be plenty of 'Baaa!' but certainly no 'humbug' when the Marian Consort appear at the chapel of Keble College, Oxford, on 8 Dec. The vocal ensemble is approaching Christmas from the perspective of the shepherds, rounding up works by Morales, Victoria and the aptly ovine Mouton. *See p98*

ON DISC Rare Polish

By happy coincidence, our festive CD round-up features two of the lesser-known Christmas gems revealed in our cover feature. Alongside more familiar yuletide fare, you can read about new recordings of Respighi's *Lauda per la Natività del Signore* and Lutosławski's *20 Polish Carols*. *See p72*

ONLINE Carol Countdown

We at *BBC Music Magazine* are celebrating this Christmas season with our Advent Calendar of Carols. From 1 December we will start the countdown of the 50 Greatest Carols, featuring performances of two a day, with the top choice published on Christmas Day itself. Visit us at classical-music.com

ALAMY

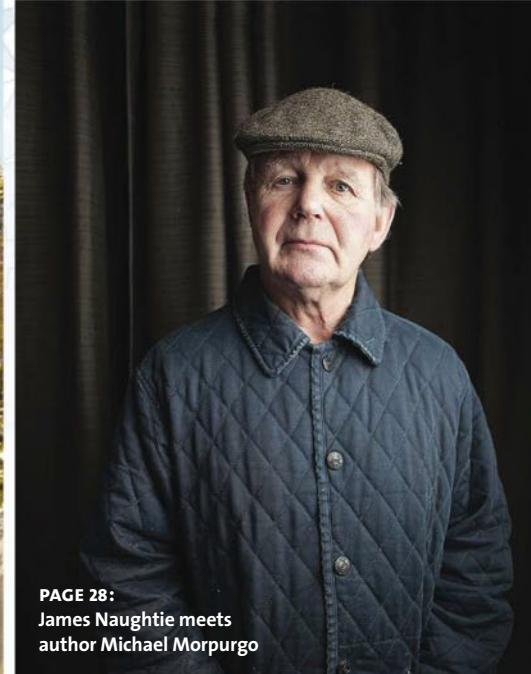


ON AIR Gentle Yule

On 10 December, Radio 3 will be escaping shopping mayhem by heading for the elegant setting of Christ Church, Spitalfields (pictured). Included in The English Concert's programme of 17th-century cantatas is Marc-Antoine Charpentier's beautiful *In nativitatem Domini Nostri*, a gentle re-telling of the Christmas story. *See p101*



PAGE 20:
Discover Sibelius's
finely-wrought *Five
Christmas Songs*



PAGE 28:
James Naughtie meets
author Michael Morpurgo



PAGE 34:
Brian Kay
pays tribute to
Sir David Willcocks

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Is it possible to buy a good musical instrument for under £100? The BBC Music Magazine team roam the South West's fairs, shops and sales to find out

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fantastic offer

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Brian Kay

Choral conductor



'David Willcocks appointed me a choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge in 1962 and laid the foundation for my life as a musician. It is a pleasure to be able to pay tribute to such an inspirational musician.' Page 34

Cheryl Frances-Hoad

Composer



'It's been an absolute joy to write a new carol for the readers of BBC Music Magazine to sing. Good day, Sir Christemas! sets a

15th-century text and is intended to be sung everywhere, from places of worship to the local pub...' Page 40

Daniel Jaffé

Writer and author



'Rimsky-Korsakov has been close to my heart since hearing *Sheherazade*, and it has been wonderful to explore the very personal roots to his brilliantly colourful orchestral works and the enchanting fairy-tale world of his operas.' Page 50

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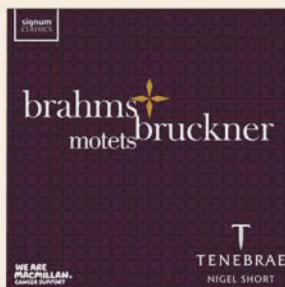
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COVER: MATT HERRING THIS PAGE: TOBY AMIES, RICHARD CANNON, BRANT TILDS, ISTOCK

CHRISTMAS REVIEWS

The important new recordings, DVDs and books reviewed



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Welcome



Bargain Hunt, Cash in the Attic... Daytime telly in the UK seems to be full of advice on snapping up a bargain at your local household auction or antique fair. Which got us thinking: now that Christmas is almost here and our finances are understandable under

considerable strain, is it possible to buy a second-hand musical instrument for next to nothing? After all, it's possible these days to pick up a fairly decent piano free of charge, provided you're prepared to take it away yourself. At the Taunton Antique Fair, I was offered a square piano that had been converted into clavichord, although the stallholder did say that it was more valuable as a sideboard than as a musical instrument. Of course, there's a very good reason why the finest violins cost upwards of hundreds of thousands of pounds, or a good bassoon has a price-tag of around £15,000. Still, we reasoned,

There's a very good reason why new bassoons have a price tag of £15,000

there must be the odd flute, violin or clarinet floating around in second-hand shops, offloaded by individuals or families who no longer have any need for them. So I sent each member of the magazine team forth (myself included, naturally), armed with £100, to antique shops, fairs, second-hand stalls and, of course, the internet. You can read about our adventures on p44, although I know what I'd say if I were presented with any of them as my Christmas present...

We have, however, lined up a classy gift for all of you this issue. You may remember that last year we commissioned Thomas Hewitt-Jones to write a carol for us (which you can hear on this month's cover CD, incidentally). We decided to make it the start of something of a tradition, and asked the wonderful composer Cheryl Frances-Hoad to come up with her own choral work. The result is a brilliant, joyful setting of 'Good Day, Sir Christemas!' (p40) that I hope will be sung by many of you at your various carol services and concerts. Let us know if you're planning to perform it, and we'll do our very best to come along and support you. Whatever music-making you have planned, we do hope you have a very happy Christmas!

Oliver Condy

Oliver Condy *Editor*

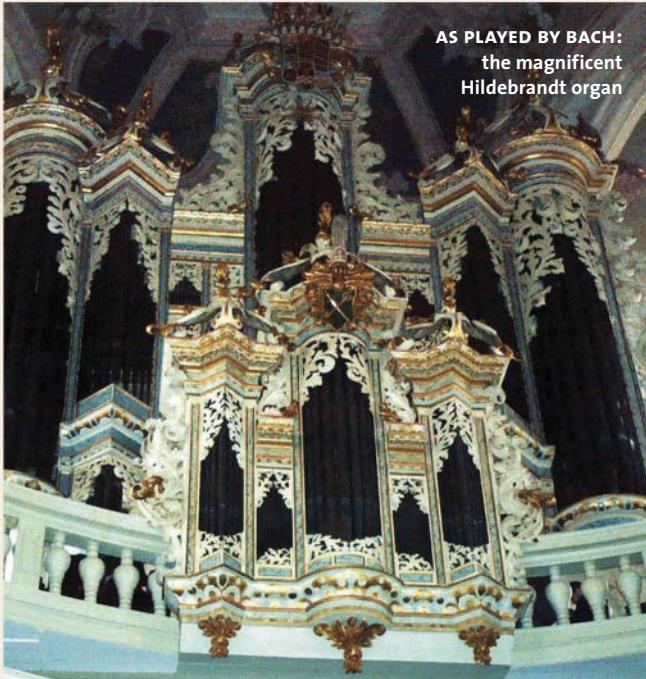
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LETTERS

Write to: The editor, *BBC Music Magazine*, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol, BS1 3BN or email: music@classical-music.com

LETTER OF THE MONTH



AS PLAYED BY BACH:
the magnificent
Hildebrandt organ

THURINGIA TREASURE

Oliver Condy's *Musical Destinations* piece on Thuringia (December) rightly points out the pleasure of performing or listening to performances in places where Bach lived and worked. He missed out one real delight, however. In Naumburg, about half way between Erfurt and Leipzig, the Wenzelskirche contains a Hildebrandt organ (above) commissioned in 1743. JS Bach was consulted about

the commission and is known to have played the completed organ; his son-in-law later became the organist for the Wenzelskirche. After a symposium on the future of the instrument in 1992, it was restored to recreate as far as possible the sound Bach would have known. Three years ago I heard Colin Andrews perform *inter alia* the Passacaglia in C minor BWV 582 on it – a magnificent instrument in a beautiful church.

Chris Greenhill, Beccles



Every month the editor will award a SolarDAB 2 Roberts radio (retail value £80 – see www.robertsradio.co.uk) to the writer of the best letter received. The editor reserves the right to shorten letters for publication.

BEFORE BEETHOVEN

In your December issue, you have an interesting guide to Beethoven's symphonies. It's a shame, therefore, that a couple of inaccuracies have crept in. Firstly, the idea of bringing back the dance movement in the finale (Symphony No. 5), wasn't 'an original idea', as Haydn had done this in his Symphony No. 46 (1772). Secondly, the *fff* in the finale of the Seventh wasn't the 'first time ever in an orchestral work' – Haydn (again!) did this in the 'Il terremoto section' of *The Seven Last Words* (the original orchestral version) in 1786.

Peter Humphreys, via email

TICKING OFF

I am surprised that your expert writers are perpetuating the idea that Beethoven's Eighth symphony *Allegretto* was 'said to have been provoked by the recent invention of the metronome'. My understanding is that the Maelzel metronome was developed three to four years after the composition of the symphony in 1812. There was a metronome invented by Dutchman Dietrich Nikolaus Winkel in 1814, again after the Eighth was written. According to Wikipedia (if this is correct), Maelzel took Winkel's invention, improved it and Beethoven then used it, amending many of his performance markings later so that the metronome could be used.

Geoff Wolfe, via email

NIGHT THOUGHTS

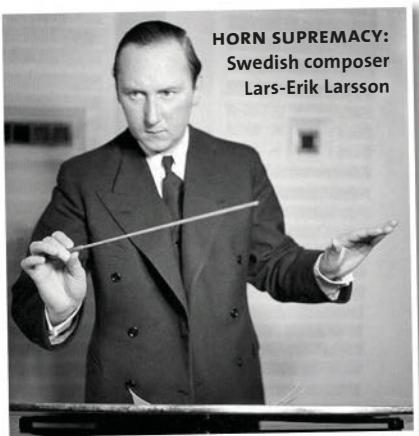
We have had some excellent performances of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* recently,

not least András Schiff at the BBC Proms, but I would like to remind readers that we do have our own excellent equivalent of the *Goldberg*s in the form of BBC Radio 3's *Through the Night*. This programme is a boon for insomniacs and night owls alike, with six hours of continuous and amazingly varied music. The presenters tell us only what we need to know in a calm, relaxing tone of voice. The music can come from any period and be played by any orchestra but with a welcome emphasis on much neglected Eastern European orchestras and soloists. It is so good to doze off to a Chopin Nocturne, wake again a little later to a symphony by Nowowiejski and enjoy the puzzle of trying to work out what it is that I am listening to. So, thank you to presenters John Shea, Catriona Young and Jonathan Swain for helping us pass those long nights! Long may you continue.

TM Godwin, Beverley

NORDIC PLEASURE

Christopher Bayne (*Letters*, November) has discovered Stenhammar's Second Symphony



HORN SUPREMACY:
Swedish composer
Lars-Erik Larsson

and wonders about other Scandinavian gems. I would recommend Stenhammar's First Symphony (although the composer himself thought that it was not up to scratch). And as a British amateur horn-player living in Sweden, I would also suggest that Lars-Erik Larsson's (below) *Förklädd Gud* (God in disguise) is well worth getting to know – a work that is very popular here with an opening horn solo to die for!

Graham Jarvis, Örebro, Sweden

SPRIGHTLY SWEDE

When I first came to Sweden over 20 years ago I knew nothing of Swedish music (well, Abba perhaps) nor could I name any Swedish composers. Then my future wife bought me a CD of Dag Wirén's music and suddenly there was a tune I knew. In the 1960s there was a BBC television programme whose signature tune went 'Dum-di-di-dum-dum, Dum-di-di-dum-dum, Dum-di-di-dum-dum-Da...' and here on this disc was that very bit of music with all the half-remembered dums, dis and dahs. It comes from the third-movement *Scherzo* of Wirén's *Serenade for Strings*. I have since heard much more of Wirén's work and enjoy its freshness and atmosphere.

Will Mallender, Upplands Väsby, Sweden

GEMS UP NORTH

You asked for your readers to suggest some Scandinavian gems. The best example in the lyric vein of Stenhammar's Symphony No. 2 would be Tubin's Fourth Symphony. It has a freshness and vigour all its own. Atterberg's Eighth Symphony uses Swedish folk tunes in a masterful fugal finale. Sinding's First Symphony bristles with excitement. And Alfvén's Fifth Symphony, although unfinished, is melodious.

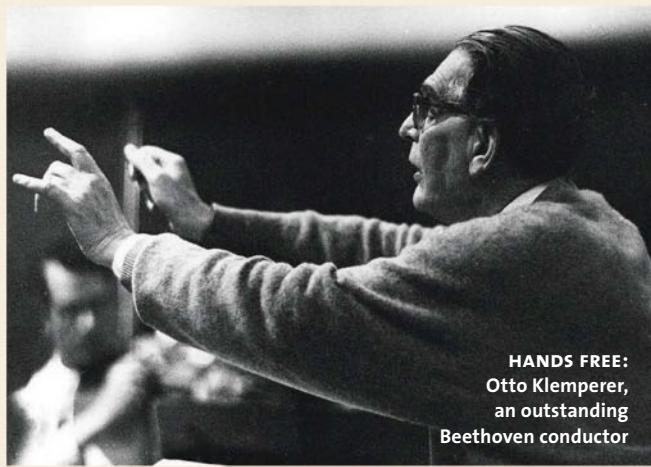
Henry Robinette, Atlanta, US

THE EDITOR REPLIES:

Lovely suggestions, though, as an Estonian, Tubin doesn't quite fit the bill!

ENCOUNTERS WITH BEETHOVEN

In our December issue, we asked how you first encountered the music of Beethoven. Here are some of your many replies...



HANDS FREE:
Otto Klemperer,
an outstanding
Beethoven conductor

My first encounter was in 1970 when 'Themes from the First' was used at the Wessex Brass Band contest then, later in the year, 'Themes from the Ninth' was used in the National Brass Band contest (both Eric Ball arrangements). As an orchestral trombone player, I have played all the symphonies requiring trombones. But that was my only chance to play in the First Symphony!

**Malcolm Dalrymple,
Southampton**

My father had a wind-up gramophone on which he used to play mostly Neapolitan songs by the incomparable Beniamino Gigli. But he also had a set of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony conducted by Toscanini. I was about nine or ten when I imbibed these. But what really woke me up to Beethoven was the evening before my 14th birthday when I caught a few minutes of the Seventh Symphony at a BBC Prom on the wireless. I came into our sitting room as the second movement was playing, conducted by Malcolm Sargent. I was spellbound and have remained so ever since with classical music and Beethoven in particular.

Rob Barton, via email

Beethoven's First Symphony was my entry point into the world of classical music. It formed part of my O-level music course at grammar school in the late 1950s. Mr Russell was our music teacher, and his enthusiasm for classical music was infectious – he even allowed me to take the LP of the symphony home to study. I failed the examination, but that didn't matter: as a consequence of the symphony and Mr Russell, I've had a lifelong love of classical music.

Barrie Gay, Chesterfield

I first heard Beethoven symphonies on the BBC Third Programme in the 1940s and '50s. I bought and played Beethoven symphonies on a 78rpm player and I remember playing part of the Sixth to my girlfriend, who I later married. I can't remember how many sides it took a vinyl 78 to play a whole symphony but that may have something to do with me never having the Ninth! It wasn't until I was married and living in Surrey that we went to the Festival Hall and heard most of the symphonies, often with Klemperer (above) conducting from his stool with no baton and large trembling hands.

Maurice Baker, via email

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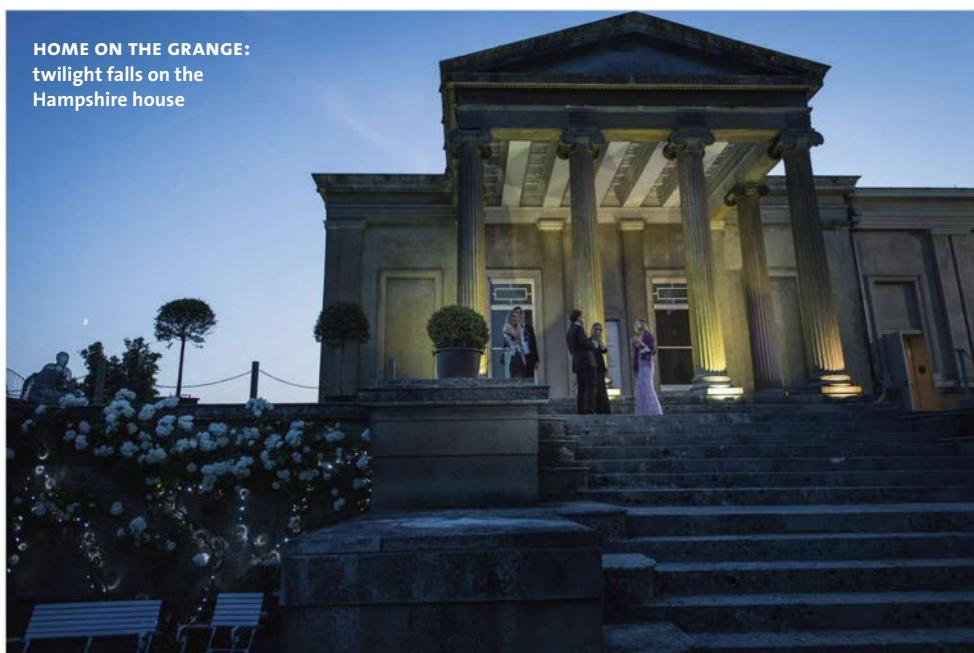


The Full Score

OUR PICK OF THE MONTH'S NEWS, VIEWS AND INTERVIEWS

Grange Park Opera to quit home

As one company leaves the crumbling stately pile, a new opera festival takes its place



The world of country-house opera has just got that little bit more complex. After 17 years at The Grange, the mansion that gave it its name, Grange Park Opera has announced it is to find a new home. The decision follows negotiations over Grange Park Opera's lease at the Hampshire estate, with an increasingly fractious dispute reaching breaking point in August.

Grange Park Opera has, however, confirmed that it intends to continue to operate under the same name even after the removal lorries have been and gone at the end of the 2016 summer season, while The Grange itself has revealed that it has no intention of falling silent – from 2017, a new company called Grange

Festival will stage performances in the estate's 200-year-old orangery. The two companies will, in effect, be rivals.

Given the tone of press statements released by both sides, one suspects that The Grange's owners, Lord Ashburton and family, and their tenants will be having to grin and bear each other during the final summer of Grange Park Opera's stay. However, the former have at least acknowledged that 'a great deal has been achieved in nearly 20 years, thanks to Grange Park Opera, co-founders Wasfi Kani and Michael Moody and their staff.'

The first artistic director of the Grange Festival will be the countertenor Michael Chance, who has expressed his desire to continue the high-class productions for

Grange Park Opera

A brief guide



1998 Grange Park Opera is founded at The Grange estate in Northington, Hampshire with a 350-seat auditorium built into the orangery.

2002 A new theatre is designed within the orangery, increasing the audience capacity to 550.

2007 Alongside The Grange, the company begins to stage productions at Nevill Holt Hall in Leicestershire.

2015 Failure to reach agreement over the terms of its lease result in Grange Park Opera announcing that it is to leave The Grange.

which the venue has become known, and to encourage more newcomers to opera.

Grange Park Opera, in turn, has confirmed that it is 'in advanced discussions over a 99-year lease' at West Horsley Place, Surrey, a stately home recently inherited – in a state of disrepair – by Bamber Gascoigne, former host of the BBC's *University Challenge*. A few suitably tough questions may lie ahead.

See Richard Morrison, p19



BBC names Young Chorister of the Year winners

Angus Benton and Agatha Pethers sing to choral glory at Radio 2's flagship competition



CHORAL CHAMPS: winners Agatha Pethers and Angus Benton; (right) judge John Rutter

Singers from Winchester and Cambridge have been named Radio 2's Young Choristers of the Year. Angus Benton, a chorister in the Winchester College chapel choir and Agatha Pethers, who

is head chorister of the chapel choir at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, impressed the judges with polished performances in the grand final at St Martin-in-the-Fields in London.



In the final, which was contested by eight singers – four girls and four boys – Benton sang *How Shall I Sing That Majesty* and *The Little Road to Bethlehem*, while Pethers performed *Gabriel's Message* and *O That I Once Past Changing Were*. Both will receive £500 worth of singing lessons, and will have the opportunity to perform on BBC radio and television throughout the year.

'It was another stellar competition this year, with an amazing group of finalists, two worthy winners, and a lovely warm supportive atmosphere in the audience,' said John Rutter, chair of the judges. Choral directors Suzi Digby and Simon Lole, and singer-songwriter Dionne Bromfield made up the rest of the panel.

The Radio 2 Young Choristers of the Year competition has been staged in its present format since 1998 – before that, the BBC and the Royal School of Church Music had run their own separate events for girl and boy singers respectively.

RISING STAR Great artists of tomorrow

Fergus Macleod Conductor

When 28-year-old Fergus Macleod steps onto the podium this autumn, he will become the youngest conductor of an English National Opera production since Sir Charles Mackerras, who was 26 when he first conducted the company and was its musical director from 1970-1977.

Macleod's musical life began at the age of three when he took up the violin – he had wanted to start even earlier, but there wasn't an instrument small enough. Eventually, however, he joined the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain as a violinist, but was soon inspired to take up the baton. 'I already loved chamber music for the musical conversation that took place within a small ensemble,' he says, adding that seeing a conductor communicate with a whole orchestra in this way was a revelation: 'It dawned on me that this was what I wanted to do.'

'I thought the idea of teaching conducting was rather strange'

He read music at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, before going on to study with conductor and pedagogue Johannes Schlaefli in Zurich. 'I'd always thought the idea of teaching conducting was rather strange. Many teachers seem to just show how they conduct, but Johannes didn't impose his style – he just simplified and magnified my conducting.'

In 2012, Macleod was appointed Royal Scottish Conservatoire Leverhulme Conducting Fellow. He acted as assistant to Donald Runnicles, conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and worked with

a number of conservatoire ensembles and the opera department. 'The fellowship gave me a chance to explore whole areas of my conducting that I hadn't yet had a chance to look at, and I loved everything! I really believe that the broader a musician you can be, the better you are going to be able to question what is in front of you.'

He is wary, though, of the ego-driven dictatorship that is sometimes associated with the baton, particularly in opera. 'Conducting is



LIBERAL THINKER:
'Conducting is about letting people play'

about letting people play, not making people play. You are in a team – the orchestra, chorus, soloists, stage management, the director – and when it gels it can be the most amazing feeling.' *Interview by Elinor Cooper; Fergus Macleod conducts ENO's production of Gilbert & Sullivan's The Mikado from 21 November to 6 February*

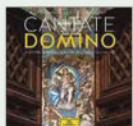
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▼ **5 Still with the music**
 Karl Jenkins
 Warner Classics 825646100538
 The greatest hits of Welsh composer Karl Jenkins, from Adiemus to his Mass for Peace



▼ **6 Bach • Beethoven • Rzewski**
 Igor Levit (piano)
 Sony Classical 88875060962
 A welcome return for pianist Igor Levit in a programme that plays to his strengths



★ **7 Biber Rosary Sonatas**
 NEW Rachel Podger (violin)
 Channel Classics CCSSA37315
 Rachel Podger's spontaneous playing pays dividends on this wonderfully colourful disc



▼ **8 Lang Lang In Paris: Chopin & Tchaikovsky**
 Lang Lang (piano)
 Sony Classical 88875117582
 The Chinese pianist takes his particular brand of flashy virtuosity to the French capital

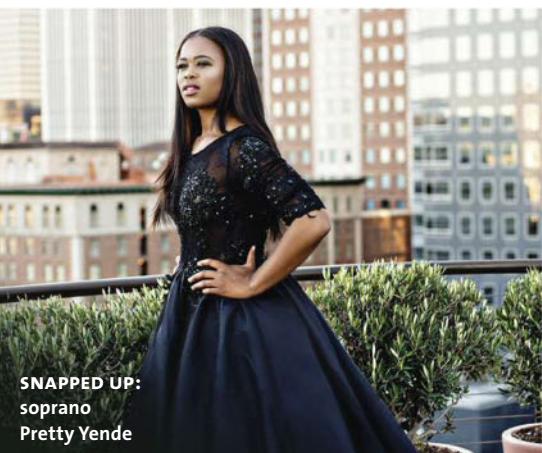


▲ **9 Songs from the Arc of Life**
 Yo-Yo Ma (cello), Kathryn Stott (piano)
 Sony Classical 88875103162
 An absorbing recital of miniatures by Fauré, Elgar, Saint-Saëns, Messiaen and more



★ **10 Vivaldi The Four Seasons**
 NEW Kerenza Peacock (violin); Trafalgar Sinfonia/Setterfield Signum SIGCD437
 One of several welcome new recordings of Vivaldi's perennial masterpiece

Visit our website at www.classical-music.com for weekly chart updates, and download the regular Radio 3 specialist chart podcast from iTunes



SNAPPED UP:
 soprano
 Pretty Yende

► A Pretty fine signing

Pretty Yende has signed exclusively to Sony Classical. The South African soprano, who decided to train as an opera singer after hearing Lakmé's Flower Duet on a British Airways television advert, will release her debut album next year. Designed to offer a snapshot of pieces that have defined her career so far, the disc will include the *Lakmé* duet along with arias from *Le comte Ory*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *I Puritani*. Yende studied in Milan and in 2011 won first prize in Plácido Domingo's Operalia Competition, along with the public and zarzuela prizes.

► Warner hat-trick

Warner Classics has made two new signings this autumn. Piano duo Christina and Michelle Naughton will release their debut album *Visions* in February, while violinist Benjamin Beilman's (pictured left) disc *Spectrum* will be out in May. The Naughtons, who both studied at the Curtis Institute, have programmed two-piano and piano four-hand works by JS Bach, Messiaen and John Adams. Beilman joins forces with pianist Yekwon Sunwoo for a disc bringing together Schubert, Janáček, Kreisler and Stravinsky. 'Yekwon and I have performed these pieces together for years,' explains Beilman, 'and we realised that the four works featured on *Spectrum* – while seemingly disparate at first glance – share many common bonds.'

► Choirs head online

The National Youth Choirs of Great Britain (NYCGB) have launched a series of digital singles. Every first Friday of the month, a new recording will be released online via iTunes, Amazon, Apple Music and Spotify. The first two instalments came out on 2 October – Britten's *Voices for Today* and a Ward Swingle arrangement of the Agincourt song. This December features Ben Parry's *Flame*, while Rutter's *Choral Fanfare* and Stanford's *The Blue Bird* get 2016 underway. 'The old strategy of recording 70 minutes of music and releasing it all at once is difficult to achieve and justify,' explains Parry, who directs the NYCGB. 'By releasing digital singles every month we believe we are ensuring the maximum audience for our music-making.'



REWIND Artists talk about their past recordings



THIS MONTH JANINE JANSEN

For her latest album, the acclaimed Dutch violinist turns to concertos by Bartók and Brahms, recorded with conductor Antonio Pappano. Available as a digital download now ahead of its release date, the actual CD is out on Decca Classics in January.

My finest moment

Schubert String Quintet •

Schoenberg Verklärte Nacht

Decca 478 3551 (2013)

I'm proud of this project because it feels somehow this recording was made in the perfect way. It is with wonderful colleagues and friends of mine whom I play with very regularly. We worked intensively on this music, performing it many times and we recorded it live at the end of a two-week tour through Europe. Living with this music and playing it with them was such a pleasure – they are wonderful, creative people. And these two pieces are two of my complete favourites of the chamber music repertoire. I love this music. Of course they are very different musical languages but they work brilliantly together and we played them together on tour. The only little blot is the strange cover for the CD's international version, which just has a picture of me and then there are the names of the other people. In Holland we have a separate edition with a great photo of the six of us, which I am proud of.



My fondest memory

Beau soir: works by Debussy, Ravel, Messiaen, Fauré, Dubugnon & L Boulanger
Decca 478 2256 (2010)

My biggest wish when I joined Decca Classics was to record the Britten Violin Concerto. It was top of my list of concertos. And then when that moment came it couldn't have been a better combination, with the London Symphony Orchestra and Paavo Järvi. But for my fondest memory I have chosen a chamber recording, *Beau soir*, with pianist Itamar Golan, whom I work with regularly. We recorded it in the Teldec Studio and had a brilliant, luxurious time together. Sometimes recording can feel like a lot of pressure because you know you have a certain



amount of time, but with this we didn't have that at all. There was no pressure: it was just the two of us in the studio into the night, even until 1am, with the darkness around us. We were just creative, making music. I adore this colourful French music – the Debussy and Ravel Sonatas and the Messiaen *Theme and Variations*. And we combined them with some short, beautiful pieces including a Nocturne by Lili Boulanger, which I first heard in a version for cello and piano and included at the last minute.

I'd like another go at...

Vivaldi Four Seasons

Decca 475 6293 (2005)

I would like to redo all of my recordings. It's not that I'm not happy with them but, on the other hand, how can one be completely happy with everything one does? I think I find it more and more difficult to make recordings. I put my heart and soul into making the best recording I can make, but what does best recording mean? I think it is maybe an unachievable goal because music is alive. It's just how you feel about it in that moment. If I had to choose, I would say I would like to re-record Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. I'm fond of my recording as it was very nice to do it with small forces of string quintet, harpsichord and theorbo, and my father and brother play on it too. It was a very special project. I still think it works really wonderfully and you don't miss a bigger string sound, but last year I played the piece again with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta, a chamber orchestra, and it felt so nice to do it with a fuller string sound. Who knows, maybe one day I will record it again like that.

STUDIOSECRETS

We reveal who's recording what, and where



RUSSIAN STRINGS: the Heath Quartet

✉ The Heath Quartet has recorded Tchaikovsky's String Quartets Nos 1 & 3 at Milton Court in London. It will be their first disc for Harmonia Mundi, although not quite their CD debut: their live recording of Tippett Quartets from Wigmore Hall will be out shortly.

✉ For BIS, violinist Vadim Gluzman has recorded Brahms's Violin Concerto with the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra and James Gaffigan in Switzerland, and the First Violin Sonata with pianist Angela Yoffe.

✉ Melvyn Tan has been at Potton Hall, Suffolk to record a recital on the theme of 'Master & Pupil'. His programme, for Onyx Classics, brings together Beethoven's Sonata No. 30, Op. 109 and Bagatelles, Op. 126 with Czerny's *Variations on a theme by Rode* and *Funeral March* for Beethoven and Liszt's B minor Sonata.

✉ Mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnston, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Martyn Brabbins have been in the concert hall to record *Four Last Songs*. Not the famous group by Strauss, but those by Vaughan Williams, orchestrated by Anthony Payne. The recording is for Albion Records.

✉ The Chiaroscuro Quartet's first recording for the BIS label – the first of a two-volume set of Haydn string quartets – comes out in Spring 2016. And in the meantime the Chiaroscuros, led by Alina Ibragimova, have been back in the studio for the second volume. Recorded in the Sendessal Bremen, the disc features the Quartets Op. 20 Nos 4-6.

#65 WASSAIL

IS BINGE DRINKING really a modern phenomenon, a forlorn symptom of today's Broken Britain? Take a good hard look at Hogarth's *Gin Lane* or a 19th-century temperance hymnbook ('Touch not the purple sparkling cup, for a serpent lurks within!'). Or, better still, the purportedly quaint, Christmas-card-sanctified practice of wassailing. Back in feudal times, the real thing was probably closer to alcohol-fuelled trick-or-treating, but with perhaps an extra twist of menace. Something of that survives in that rousing up-tempo carol *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*, with its demands for 'figgy pudding' and 'good cheer' – ie beer, and lots of it – followed by the still faintly minatory, 'And we won't go until we get some'. Of course, this may have been good-natured banter sometimes... but more often there would have been at least a simmering undertone of good old-fashioned class resentment. Originally it was the peasantry who presented themselves on the Lord of the Manor's doorstep on Twelfth Night,

DISCOVERING MUSIC

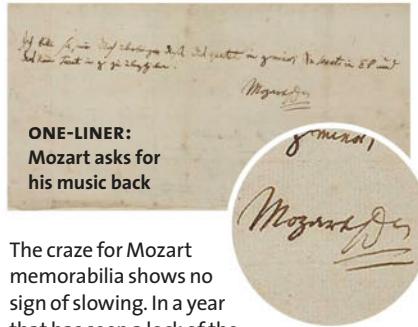
Stephen Johnson gets to grips with classical music's technical terms



and received food and drink in exchange for blessings and pledges of goodwill. With time and a shift in social stratification, the target (I use the word advisedly) might be any wealthy person, the wassailers any group of drink-filled men, and failure to dispense appropriate largesse might be met with curses, or worse.

The origins of the word 'Wassail' lie in the Middle English 'waes hael', and probably before that in the Old Norse 'ves heill' – 'be well'. If you're partial to ancient formalities the correct response is 'drinc hael' – 'drink well'. (I might try reviving that.) Norse roots suggest that the practice is older than Christianity, and the seasonal connection is more to do with the kind of pagan midwinter rituals designed to encourage sun and vegetable growth to return after the darkest, deadliest time of the year. In cider-producing parts of the country, the wassail health-wish was often addressed to the precious apple and pear trees, to an accompaniment of raucous singing and banging of cooking pots, and of course lots and lots of drinking. Accounts of festivities like this make one wonder if our modern Saturnalia aren't a bit tame in comparison. TV's Armstrong and Miller caught this rather well in their *Wassail* sketch: 'Do you do a low-alcohol wassail cup?' Apparently old-style wassails still occur in the more un-reconstructed parts of the West Country. For pity's sake, nobody tell Health and Safety.

A very noteworthy note



ONE-LINER:
Mozart asks for
his music back

The craze for Mozart memorabilia shows no sign of slowing. In a year that has seen a lock of the composer's hair go for £35,000, a one-line letter written by him in 1786 has now sold for \$217,000 (£142,000) in Boston, US. In the scrawly note, Mozart asks a friend to return the scores of his Piano Quartet No. 1, Violin Sonata No. 33 and Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello in G Major, K496. It is mention of these works, says Bobby Livingston of Boston's RR Auction, that makes the note so valuable: 'Mozart letters are among the most sought after of all musical autographs. With such specificity concerning his own compositions, this is an outstanding example.' \$217,000 is indeed a lot of notes for a note about notes.

ILLUSTRATION: ADAM HOWLING, JOHN MILLAR, LENA KERN, GETTY

APP REVIEW

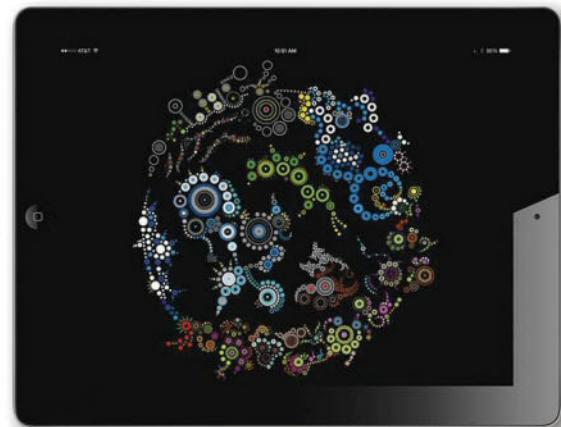
Every issue we explore a recent digital product

Crowded Planet Free; £6.99 for all tracks

This imaginative app allows users to mix music using looped samples from developer and composer Robert Szymanek's album of the same name. As that name suggests, it's designed in the guise of the earth, and different areas – such as 'The Great Plains' and 'The Ocean' – each represent a different song from the album. The detail of design is exceptional – almost every feature on the app is linked to a loop, and every zone has different characteristics, so exploring the sound bank fully would take hours. But to take an example, 'The Sky' has a wonderful minute flock of birds,

which all tweet with tiny piano motifs. Of course, the *Crowded Planet* app isn't really an instrument in the traditional sense, and those looking for creative freedom may find its sample-model restrictive. However, it is lots of fun, and arguably worth it for the fabulous artwork alone.

Elinor Cooper ★★★★



Library welcomes G&S



The British Library has acquired the D'Oyly Carte Theatre Company archive, making 107 years of Gilbert and Sullivan history available to the public. Consisting of comprehensive records and artefacts dating right back to the company's founding by Richard D'Oyly Carte, one of the archive's highlights is Arthur Sullivan's personal score of the opera *Iolanthe*. It's

accompanied by a wealth of recordings, cigarette cards, photographs, financial records and contracts, press cuttings, librettos and orchestral parts. D'Oyly Carte commissioned his first Gilbert and Sullivan production, *Trial by Jury*, in 1875 and continued to enjoy a successful partnership with the pair until a financial quarrel ended their alliance in 1890. The D'Oyly Carte Theatre Company continued to produce G&S operettas, both in the UK and further afield, until finally closing in 1982.

TWITTER ROOM

Who's saying what on the micro-blogging site



@Svieridor *Sitting on hotel room floor, laptop in lap, trying to figure out Twitter... and what to send as my first ever tweet. Will this do?*

Yes – splendidly. Welcome, baritone Roderick Williams (left), to the weird and wonderful world of Twitter

@gavricivana *In the land of funky lamps, wind farms & bridges rising out of the sea and v v tall people #Copenhagen #DanishLampFetish #happy*
Pianist Ivana Gavrić sums up the essence of Denmark... but forgets the pastries

@ThomasGouldVLN *Where else but on a plane would anyone not laugh out loud when offered a spinach sandwich to eat?*

Violinist Thomas Gould regrets flying with Air Rabbit

@ifagiolini *In my spoken intro, the phrase 'I heard a great programme on Radio 3 abt 15 years ago' greeted with huge mirth. Didn't mean it like that...*

Choral conductor Robert Hollingworth wishes he'd chosen his pre-concert words just a little more carefully

@roseandfriends *Nothing more satisfying than some supremely successful photocopying.*

Bass Matthew Rose (right) nails the meaning of true happiness



Notes from the piano stool

David Owen Norris



This Christmas, I'll be scrambling over the slippery rooftops as usual. No reindeer in sight, don't worry – it's not a Santa delusion. But it never occurred to the rugged men who built the organ loft at Winchester College that it might be convenient to reach it from within the chapel. It's quite a long walk in the pitch dark, down the cloisters, duck under an arch, find the staircase, hope not too much has crumbled away over the last 500 years, tiptoe cautiously over the leads, through two doors, and then try not to trip down the vertiginous steps that lead to journey's end.

I'll be there to conduct the annual carol service of the Rose Road charity, a wonderful institution which looks after young people with a variety of very severe difficulties. Many of the young clients come to the service, and it's great to see how the music and the candles and the sense of place please both them and their carers. The Bishop of Southampton presides over the service, members of the Waynflete Singers sing and one of my Southampton students plays the superb three-manual Mander organ.

It's often hard to tell what an organ sounds like when you're actually playing it

I don't make a habit of shouting at my students, of course, but Winchester College chapel leaves me little choice. When at Oxford, I developed a preternaturally clear style of speech in the seven-second acoustic of the chapel at Keble College, with the organ loft some 40 feet up in the air – but there you can at least whizz up and down the spiral staircase if things need clarification. No chance of a quiet consultation at Winchester, just brutal honesty. 'Draw the Fifteenth (organ stop); we're a bit flat down here,' I might bellow (not that the Wayns ever go flat, of course); or perhaps 'You're much too loud; I said you're much... Hello? Hello?'. Trouble is, if I go up to the organ loft, we lose half the rehearsal.

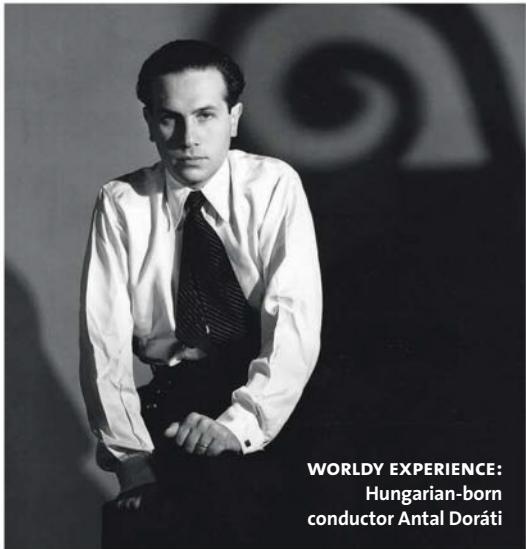
It's often hard to tell what an organ sounds like when you're actually playing it. Every book of instruction tells you to take a friend to play your choice of stops to you while you walk around to see just how loud they are and whether they're likely to balance with the choir. This Christmas, we'll all be pretty loud, I imagine, because it will be our opportunity to remember Sir David Willcocks. The choirs of angels will sing with extra vim, and yea, Lord, we shall greet thee with astonishing vehemence.

But the Rose Road children like us to sing quietly too, at Winchester. *Gabriel's Message*, perhaps, with Edgar Pettman's subtle, spare harmonisation, and Sabine Baring Gould's translation from the Basque. His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame. Gloria. ■

David Owen Norris is a pianist, composer and radio presenter

MUSIC TO MY EARS

What the classical world has been listening to this month



WORLDY EXPERIENCE:
Hungarian-born
conductor Antal Doráti

THOMAS NEWMAN *film composer*

 The first moment that I was drawn into classical music as a kid – at about ten or 11 years old – was when I heard **Dvořák's** 'New World' Symphony No. 9, in a recording conducted by Antal Doráti (above). It was the drama of the piece that took my ears in a way they'd never been taken before, and I found myself listening to it, and in particular its motifs, over and over and again. I still appreciate it to this day.

■ I think I like **Charles Ives**, a big hero of mine, for a number of reasons. The silliest is that I share a birthday with him! But more seriously, I like his pioneering spirit and his sensibilities, and I always find that I am very moved by the beginning of his *The Unanswered Question*, in terms of what it makes me think and how it makes me feel. If I had to name one recording, it would be Leonard Bernstein's, but I'm more drawn to the piece than an actual performance. ■ **Ravel's** *Daphnis et Chloé*, conducted on my recording by Pierre Boulez, is a work that has always haunted me and has appealed to me with its dreaminess. For me, that appeal lies especially in the harmonic colour and intricacy of orchestration – when Stravinsky described Ravel as a 'Swiss watchmaker' I've always thought that it was intended as a compliment. It's hard to dissect Boulez's recording apart and explain why I like it other than to say I always find myself drawn to it.

OUR CHOICES

The BBC Music team's current favourites



Oliver Condy
Editor

A gem of a box-set landed on my desk recently: ten CDs of remastered Mercury Living Presence recordings by legendary organist **Marcel Dupré**. In among the Bach, Saint-Saëns, Widor and Franck, Dupré performs his own music, including the *Variations sur un Noël*, played idiosyncratically on the organ of St Sulpice, Paris in 1959. It's beautifully atmospheric, even if the organ does need a bit of a tune...



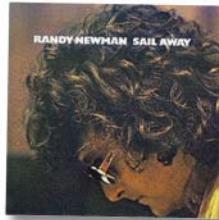
Jeremy Pound
Deputy editor

It was only when we compiled a feature on the 50 Greatest Carols in 2008 that I got to know **Morten Lauridsen's** *O Magnum Mysterium*. I was instantly captivated by its gorgeous crushed harmonies and overall sense of contemplative calm, and it is now an essential part of my Christmas listening, particularly on the excellent all-Lauridsen disc by the Chamber Choir of Europe.



Rebecca Franks
Reviews editor

Alongside *Jingle Bells* and a jazzy 12 *Days of Christmas*, **Corelli's** *Christmas Concerto* was always a staple of my school's Christmas concert – although I couldn't promise we got all the notes. Even playing it year in, year out didn't wear the music thin and it still sets the festive mood for me, particularly the lilting pastorale movement. This year I've been listening to the Avison Ensemble's lively recording of it from 2012.



■ My cousin, the singer-songwriter **Randy Newman**, has always been a towering creative figure in my life. We still have a good relationship and I am always talking to him about music. Of his songs, I'd pick out 'Love Story'

and 'God's Song'. The sheer power of his irony, and the pathos on one hand and his understanding of humour on the other, always make for an exceptionally rich listening experience.

Thomas Newman's score for 'Spectre', the new James Bond film, is out now on the Decca label

ROBY LAKATOS *violinist*



I think the Greek musician Leonidas Kavakos is today's greatest classical violin player. I love listening to his **Brahms** Violin Concerto disc on Decca, with the Gewandhaus Orchestra and Riccardo Chailly – for me it's the best interpretation. I've known Leonidas for a long time. Maybe at some point we'll work together and record something like the Bach Double Violin Concerto.

■ For me, the Belgian countertenor **Dominique Corbier** is a very special singer. I love his way with music, and love listening to him in his disc of Alessandro Scarlatti. I discovered him in the making



of my Vivaldi *Four Seasons* album – I needed a choir but we had no time to prepare one before the sessions. Our producer came up with the idea of asking Dominique to record the vocals. The result is beyond my wildest dreams.

■ My greatest musical hero is **Miles Davis**. I encountered his musical legacy and philosophy fairly early on in my musical development. I play jazz as often as I can with musicians like Tony Lakatos (my brother, a saxophonist), saxophonist Joe Lovano, guitarist and bassist Bireli Lagrene, trumpeter Randy Brecker, and drummer Niek de Brujin. I learned a lot about improvising by listening to Miles Davis. I cherish his albums *Kind of Blue* and *Tutu*.

■ And, of course, I love many more violin players. If I must pick two, it would be **Jascha Heifetz** and **Stéphane Grappelli**. I had the chance to play with Grappelli and we performed together on the album *Lakatos with Musical Friends*. It was great to play



with him – an important experience. But that was more than 25 years ago, not long before he died. And when it comes to Heifetz? I listen to everything! His Bruch *Scottish Fantasy*, for instance, is fantastic. But that's the point. Everything he did is fantastic. *Roby Lakatos's new album of Vivaldi's Four Seasons is out now on Avanti Classics*

BEN PARRY conductor



I've been listening to **Bach's** B Minor Mass because of a concert we're doing with the new Fellowship Octet – just launched with the National Youth Choirs – and my Aldeburgh Voices. We're doing Bach's Magnificat, but also Cantata No. 191, featuring the Gloria from the Mass – Bach wrote the Gloria as a separate piece and, before incorporating it into the Mass, he'd put it in the cantata. The music is so joyous and uplifting. ■ I've also been enjoying **Mozart's** String Quartet in G, K387. My wife Kathryn plays in a quartet, The Revolutionary Drawing Room, and they've released a CD called *A Viennese Quartet Party*, with music by Mozart, Haydn, Dittersdorf and Vaňhal. There was a party where all four composers played together and Michael Kelly (an actor and singer) wrote it down in his diary. The last movement is a fast fugue which I arranged for voices when I was in The Swingle Singers. ■ **Parry's** *Blest Pair of Sirens* is a setting of John Milton's poem for huge choir and orchestra. There is also a version for organ I listened to when Sir David Willcocks died in September – Sir David was such a legend, a great mentor and a champion of British choral music. Radio 3's *Choral Evensong* recently

OUR CHOICES

The BBC Music team's current favourites



Neil McKim

Production editor

One frosty day a teacher played my class the 'Troika' from **Prokofiev's** *Lieutenant Kijé* on LP, a work that for me evokes perfectly the crisp feel of winter weather. I've found the 1934 film for which it was composed on YouTube, and here the 'Troika' is a somewhat rowdy affair – stridently sung with yells from the sleigh-riders, set over the top of the famous bell-filled orchestration.



Elinor Cooper

Editorial assistant

Style Antico's disc *Puer Natus Est* – *Tudor Music for Advent and Christmas* contains some of my favourite Tudor works. **Tallis's** reverent *Videte miraculum* and **Robert White's** Magnificat are highlights, both handled exceptionally well by this immaculately drilled choir. For anyone feeling out-jolted by their 100th 'Deck the Halls' of the season, this might be the answer.



AVANT-GARDE:
mezzo soprano
Cathy Berberian

re-broadcast an amazing recording from King's College Chapel – with King's College Choir, The Bach Choir and Cambridge University Music Society – originally aired to celebrate Willcocks's 90th birthday.

■ **Stripsody** is a piece for solo singer by **Cathy Berberian** (above). It's a graphic score, so the singer reacts to what has been written, with pictures, words and shapes. She was an extraordinary singer who was married to the Italian composer Berio and this was her party piece – you can find it on YouTube. When I was preparing a performance of Stockhausen's *Stimmung*, I watched this to get my head around the avant-garde style.

Ben Parry conducts Bach at Christmas at Aldeburgh Music, 19 December

AND MUSIC TO YOUR EARS...

You tell us what you've been enjoying on disc and in the concert hall



Karen McAulay,

Glasgow

I'm listening to John Butt and the Dunedin Consort's recording of **Handel's** oratorio *Esther*. In October, I gave a talk at Edinburgh Central Library on the Bicentenary of the First Edinburgh Musical Festival, and the overture to *Esther* was the very first piece opening that first festival. It's beautifully performed here, but the overture is very much 'understated grandeur' – a solemn start to such an exciting and eagerly awaited event.



Gary King,

Philadelphia, US

I've been listening to the Piano Sonata by **Frank Bridge**. This work differs markedly from his earlier, 'pastoral' music, and was not well

received at its premiere. Ninety years later, the varied rhythms, chromatic writing and bitonality sound tame to my ears, but still communicate Bridge's distress at the horrors of the Great War. There are two excellent performances currently available, but my favorite is the 1978 recording by Eric Parkin, which may have been the first.



Rich Seidner
and **Rosella**
Crawford-Bathurst,

California, US

Our initial delight at discovering online a performance of **Bizet's** *Carmen* at the Théâtre Antique d'Orange, starring Jonas Kaufmann as Don José, was surpassed when we watched the aria he sings to Carmen near the end of Act II. Nothing prepared us for the incredibly gently

way he sings his love. The ovation he received was nothing compared to the joy we felt watching it.



Ian Walker,

Ontario, Canada

This summer, I found an amazing seven-CD set of **Bruno Walter** conducting Mahler symphonies as well as *Das Lied von der Erde*. I had heard of Walter's legendary interpretations – now I understand how, lyrically, these symphonies are like listening to an intensive Lieder programme. During the early part of my career as a baritone, I was mentored by the contralto Maureen Forrester who shared with me, many times, how Walter was her own initial coach and mentor. These historic recordings are to be appreciated by any passionate Mahler fan!



MESSIAEN
La Nativité du Seigneur (The Birth of the Saviour)
Tom Winpenny, Organ

Hedd Thomas,
Bangor, Wales

Christmas seems to get earlier and earlier, though I

defy the premature cheer by keeping the jewel cases containing carols firmly shut until at least the last Sunday of Advent. Less cute Christmas card and more like a Rothko canvas in colour and ambition, there's thankfully never a wrong time of year to enjoy **Olivier Messiaen's** wonderful 1935 work for organ, *La Nativité du Seigneur*. Tom Winpenny's 2014 recording on Naxos, played

on the Harrison & Harrison organ of St Alban's Cathedral, is simply sublime.

Tell us what concerts or recordings you've been enjoying by emailing us at musictomyears@classical-music.com



NEWS IN BRIEF



IBERIA BOUND: Andrew Gourlay

REIGN IN SPAIN

Andrew Gourlay has been appointed musical director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León. The young Brit, who has been the orchestra's principal guest conductor since last year, will take up the post at the Auditorio Miguel Delibes in Valladolid in January 2016. He succeeds Lionel Bringuier, who himself has taken over from David Zinman as chief conductor of the Tonhalle Zurich.

PRIZED PERFORMER

Happy times, too, for Augustin Hadelich, who has won the inaugural Warner Music Prize. The German violinist was selected from a pool of 16 artists, all of whom performed at the Carnegie Hall during the 2014-2015 season, to be awarded the \$100,000 prize.

ENLIGHTENED BUTT

Another musicians raising a celebratory glass this Christmas is John Butt, who has been named as a principal artist to the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. The conductor, keyboardist and scholar will lead the period instrument ensemble as it launches itself into a new five-year focus on JS Bach.

JOHN ADIE

We end, though, on a sad note with the news that John Adie, co-founder of the Two Moors Festival, has died at the age of 69. Since John and his wife Penny set up the festival in the west of England in 2001, it has gone from strength to strength, winning admiration for its wonderfully inventive programming. John also raised over £1.5m for musical causes.

Tired? Take a choral break

Gloucester Cathedral singers bring motorway relief

With its sleek, grassy curves and posh organic food outlets, Gloucester Services is not your average motorway stop – the sort of place, in fact, to have its dowdier neighbours Strensham and Michaelwood casting their gaze along the M5 in envy.

And now, Britain's swankiest service station has taken its celestial status a little higher still by adding live choral music to the mix. For six Friday evenings in September and October, motorists stopping off for a pee, pie and petrol did so to the accompaniment of altos, tenors and basses from Gloucester Cathedral singing compline, the end-of-day service. All very refined, and this, say the service station owners, is just the beginning, as they want to encourage and showcase more local musical talent within their sparkling premises. Perhaps next time, it might be the entire Gloucester Cathedral Choir, trebles and all? If so, we trust, that Howells's Gloucester Service will be included in their repertoire.



AFTER HOURS

Musicians and their hobbies

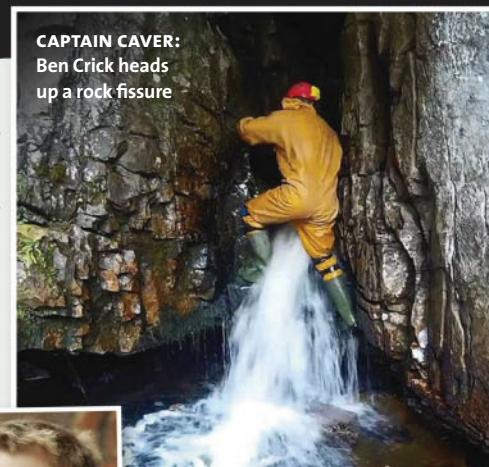
BEN CRICK
Conductor

CAVING

My dad was a member of Bradford Pothole Club, and used to take me caving as a kid. My enthusiasm grew from there. There are very few things in life that completely absorb you while you are doing them, but caving is one, not least because there are high consequences if you get it wrong. What I like, too, is that the more I get my ropework skills and fitness up to scratch, the more I minimise the risks – like conducting, as long as you are prepared, the risks of it going wrong are vastly reduced. I go caving about once a week, as it only takes half a day. From where

I live in Skipton, I can go caving in, say, the Ease Gill System or Gaping Gill, a big cavern the size of York Minster, and be back home,

CAPTAIN CAVER:
Ben Crick heads up a rock fissure



showered and ready to conduct in the evening. I tend to go caving in a pair with a friend, though having three or four people is better. Sadly, none of my orchestra colleagues share my passion. I once took a flute player, who hated it. It was the bit where we had to go under water in a submerged stream that proved too much...



PPA Columnist of the Year

The Richard Morrison column

Are the fallings out at Grange Park Opera anything to worry about?



All bizarre things must come to an end, and it seems that show business has just lost one of its weirder double-acts. Never again will performances at The Grange in Hampshire commence with a warm-up comic turn from Wasfi Kani, the feisty East End-raised Indian who runs the opera company there, and Lord Ashburton, the former BP chairman who owns this grandly dilapidated pile. After 17 years of unlikely artistic bliss, the two have fallen out.

Ashburton, or rather his son Mark Baring who now manages the place (yes, the family are part of the Barings banking dynasty), has had the temerity to demand rent from Kani's opera company. Kani is the world champion at squeezing rich business moguls for donations, but being asked to pay money to them instead came as an unappealing shock. She promptly went into negotiation with another aristocratic figure – Bamber Gascoigne, the former *University Challenge* presenter, who last year unexpectedly inherited the 500-year-old West Horsley Place in Surrey from his great-aunt, the Duchess of Roxburghe. (Why don't I have a great-aunt like that?) The result seems to be that Kani's outfit, Grange Park Opera, will do one more summer at The Grange, then decamp to West Horsley Place in 2017. Gascoigne is apparently prepared to spend millions to ensure his crumbling Tudor mansion is still standing

by then, and he has apparently granted Kani a 40-year lease at a nominal rent.

Meanwhile back at the ranch – sorry, the Grange – an entirely new opera company led by Michael Chance (a distinguished countertenor but not exactly noted as an administrator) will set up something called 'The Grange Festival'. Or maybe not. The potential for audience confusion is so enormous that one can easily envisage a legal battle over the word 'Grange' that could outlive

taxpayers a penny, and when the repertoire is so unexpectedly wide ranging, whether it's Wagner's *Ring* at Longborough, unknown Haydn at Garsington, or Bryn Terfel in *Fiddler on the Roof* at The Grange.

But something about these posh jamborees does seem to lead inexorably to discord. And in this case there's a distinct feeling of history repeating itself, because Kani, before coming to The Grange, was the artistic director at Garsington where she also fell out with that estate's owner, Leonard

The legal battle over the word 'Grange' could outlive most of the people involved

most of the people involved. After all, Ashburton is 87, Gascoigne 81.

Country-house opera has been a success story in England over the past 30 years. What the Christies pioneered at Glyndebourne has been wondrously emulated at The Grange, Garsington, Longborough and several other stately homes. Admittedly the clientele is overwhelmingly the monied, middle-aged, middle classes of middle England, but the shows keep hundreds of singers, players and technicians in work through the summer months. One may not warm to the atmosphere: the unashamed, bubbly-quaffing displays of exclusivity. Yet it's hard to be critical when none of these country-house operas costs the

Ingrams (also, curiously, a Barings banker). Mind you, falling out with Ingrams wasn't hard. He was forever at war with his neighbours and South Oxfordshire District Council. The ostensible reason was 'noise'. But behind this lurked a whole package of snobby hatreds towards an outsider (Ingrams had bought his manor house 'only' seven years earlier) who had the effrontery to invite the paying public into a village full of rich residents who lived there precisely to escape the madding crowd.

They picked the wrong man for a quarrel. Whenever council officials issued a summons for 'unreasonable disturbance' Ingrams took them to court and won. The neighbours exacted revenge by

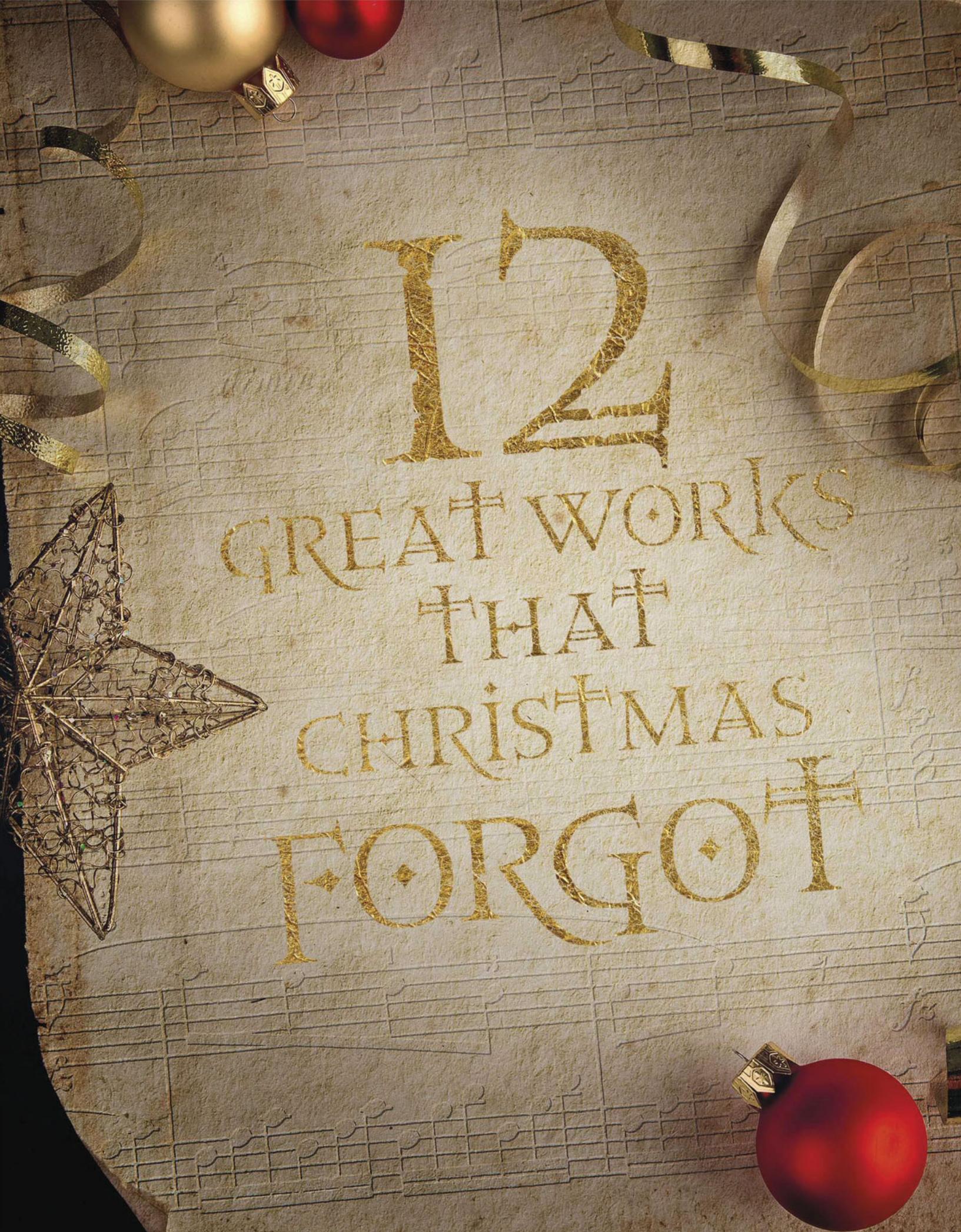
drowning the first night of one Garsington season with a blitz of car alarms and lawn-strimmers. Little wonder that, a couple of years after Ingrams died in 2005, his family decided that enough was enough and asked the opera company to find new premises, which they happily did in the massive Getty estate at Wormsley in Buckinghamshire.

It's tempting to say that summer opera festivals work best where one despotic dynasty is in charge of everything, as is the case with the Christies at Glyndebourne and, more recently, the Grahams at Longborough. But then you look at the internecine wars that have flared and flickered for decades among the Wagners at Bayreuth, and you realise that blood-relationships are no guarantee of artistic harmony (or any other sort of harmony, for that matter). The real cause of discord at nearly all British opera festivals is that they started as the whimsical pastimes of rich eccentrics but quickly grew into businesses with seven-figure annual turnovers and international reputations. Along the way there were bound to be clashes of ideals, managerial styles and egos. What's happened at The Grange is sad but perhaps inevitable, given the force of the personalities involved. But if the result is that we have two opera festivals where previously there was one, where's the problem? ■

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and a columnist of The Times



12 GREAT WORKS THAT CHRISTMAS FORGOT





THERE'S MORE TO CHRISTMAS THAN BACH AND HANDEL, BUT JUST HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH THE WIDER WORLD OF FESTIVE MUSIC? JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE A DOZEN LESSER-KNOWN GEMS THAT REALLY SHOULD BE ON YOUR YULETIDE LISTENING LIST...

WORDS BY ERIK LEVI, TERRY BLAIN, JEREMY POUND
REBECCA FRANKS & ELINOR COOPER

Isn't it about time we started getting to know Christmas music a little better? No, we're not suggesting you spend the festive season listening to, say, *Silent Night* or *Once in Royal* on continuous loop. We're talking about the huge number of works, great and small, that hardly ever get even a mention, let alone a performance. Shouldn't we be welcoming back into the warmth some of those works that have long found themselves pushed out into cold, unloved and largely forgotten? It's not as if there's nothing out there.

Many of the finest composers have, over the centuries, applied their genius to festive works, but surprisingly few are widely known about. And let's be frank, here – do we *really* need quite so many *Messiahs* every year? When it comes to the festive music scene, few other works come even close to challenging the domination of Handel's much-loved oratorio. Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* will doubtless get a few welcome run-outs this season, and the high-voices-with-harp combination of Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* is always guaranteed to pull in a crowd. If you're lucky, you may get to wallow in the pleasures of a Berlioz *L'enfance du Christ* or a Schütz *Christmas Story* or two or, on a more intimate level, the intricate delights of Messiaen's *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* for solo piano or his *La Nativité du Seigneur* for organ. But, in terms of larger-scale Christmas works, that's pretty much it.

So, we asked *BBC Music Magazine*'s panel of experts to name the works that they believe deserve to be more familiar. They sent back a sackful of replies, with suggestions ranging from Liszt magnum opuses to charming Brahms trios. Below, we select our 12 favourites, one for each Day of Christmas, along with five festive operas and five stocking-filers to complete the yuletide scene. It's time to start exploring... ▶

PALESTRINA

Missa Hodie Christus Natus Est (1575)

The Renaissance great greets Christmas with an immaculately crafted choral gem

Palestrina's *Missa Hodie Christus Natus Est* is a parody mass: namely, a reworking of an earlier motet of the same name. It was written in 1575, during Palestrina's second stint as choirmaster of St Paul's Basilica in Rome. The work is a wonderful example of poly-choral writing: Palestrina heightens the interaction between the two choirs by using contrasting voicing, one high choir, and one low. Writing for two independent choirs in this manner was a relatively new practice: evidence that even late in his career Palestrina was still pushing boundaries. It is a truly special work, as expansive moments that rock seamlessly between the two choirs are contrasted with quicker dance-like sections. The mass's opening is identical to that of the motet, though sadly without the jolly antiphonal 'Noe' sections that follow in the original.

Recommended Recording: The Sixteen/Harry Christophers *Coro COR16105*

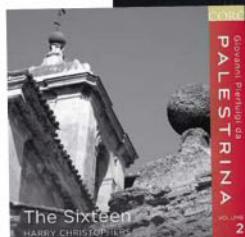
CHARPENTIER

Messe de Minuit pour Noël (c.1694)

Good humour aplenty infuses the Baroque



MASS APPEAL:
Palestrina's Christmas work
is brilliantly inventive

composer's blend of
sacred and secular

Imagine going to Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve expecting solemnity... and suddenly hearing a succession of popular tunes, some decidedly chirpy, in the music that the choir is singing. What would your reaction be? We don't know what the parishioners at the Église

Saint Louis, Paris, thought, as we're not sure when exactly they first heard the new *Messe de Minuit* written by their *maitre de musique* Marc-Antoine Charpentier. But they would have known what Charpentier was doing: using tunes from familiar Christmas songs as the basic melodic material for a piece of religious music. Their titles – 'Joseph est bien Marie', 'Or, nous dites Marie', 'Une jeune pucelle' – are unfamiliar to English speakers, but the melodies would have been as instantly recognisable in the early 1690s as 'Silent Night' and 'Once in Royal David's City' are to contemporary audiences. Ten of these 'noëls' are quoted in total, and it's tempting to assume that Charpentier was simply having some harmlessly irreverent seasonal fun with his well-heeled Jesuit parishioners. More generally, though, his use of popular material slots comfortably into the Jesuit philosophy of enculturation, the presentation of the Gospel message in forms and styles appropriate to the time and place in which it is presented. What's certain is that the *Messe de Minuit* is one of the freshest, most glowingly joyful of all works written for the Christmas season – 'a perfect synthesis', as Charpentier expert Catherine Cessac puts it, 'between the secular and the liturgical, between popular and learned writing'.

Recommended recording:

Aradia Ensemble/Kevin Mallon
Naxos 8.557229

FRY

Santa Claus Symphony (1853)

Ho ho ho. A colourful orchestral romp from one of the 19th century's quirkiest composers

William Henry Fry was an interesting character. The first ever person to hold the post of music critic on a daily newspaper in the US, he was nothing if not inventive as a composer himself – his *Niagara Symphony* of 1854 employed 11 timpani to create the sound of cascading water, while his *Santa Claus Symphony* of the previous year includes one of the first known orchestral uses of the saxophone. Though Fry called the latter a 'symphony', it is really more of a tone poem, set in one continuous movement with a distinct storyline to it. Over its 25-or-so minutes we hear, among various other things, a Christmas party in full swing, the forlorn sound of a traveller getting lost in the snow and, played by the bassoon, Santa himself sidling down the chimney. Admittedly, calling Fry's festive frolic a 'masterpiece' might be over-egging the Christmas pudding a tad, but the piece is a lot of fun.

Recommended recording: Royal Scottish National Orchestra/Tony Rowe
Naxos 8.559057

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT...?

Christmas music's curious cast of agnostics and atheists



WE'RE NOT DREAMING:
Ellin and Irving Berlin and
(right) Herbert Howells



ONE OF THE MORE curious facts about Christmas music is just how much of it was written by composers who were either atheists or agnostics. Included in this feature alone are non-believers such as **Brahms**, **Vaughan Williams**, **Fauré** and **Debussy**. Now add to that list the likes of **Holst**, whose works include his *Christmas Day* choral fantasy and, of course, the most famous setting of 'In the Bleak Midwinter' of all, and **Herbert Howells**,

without whose *Three Carol-Anthems* the choral repertoire would be all the poorer. And then, straying off the classical path a little, there's **Irving Berlin**, whose lack of belief in Christmas was joined by outright loathing. No one, in fact, could have been 'dreaming of a white Christmas' less than the man who wrote that song. 'We both hated Christmas,' Berlin's wife Ellin later told their daughter, Mary. 'We only did it for you children.'

SAINT-SAËNS

Oratorio de Noël (1858)

The young Frenchman makes his mark with a choral work of atmosphere and gentle charm

Saint-Saëns was just 22 when, in 1858, he became the organ player at the prestigious Madeleine church in Paris, where Liszt, hearing him improvise, judged him the greatest organist in the world. The young Frenchman was also keen to display his credentials as a composer, and he did so immediately, premiering the *Oratorio de Noël* in his inaugural Christmas season. Oddly, just one of the work's ten movements has a text directly relating to Christmas, though the gentle, pastoral atmosphere of that movement – the story of shepherds abiding in the fields – permeates most of the others, the intimacy of the music enhanced by the delicate scoring for harp, organ and strings, and the plaintive writing for five soloists. Bach and Mozart are clear models, and there's also an ethereal foreshadowing in 'Tecum Principium' of the aquarium in Saint-Saëns's own *Carnival of the Animals* that would appear three decades later.

Recommended recording:

Vocalensemble Rastatt & Les Favorites/Holger Speck
Carus CARUS83352

BRAHMS

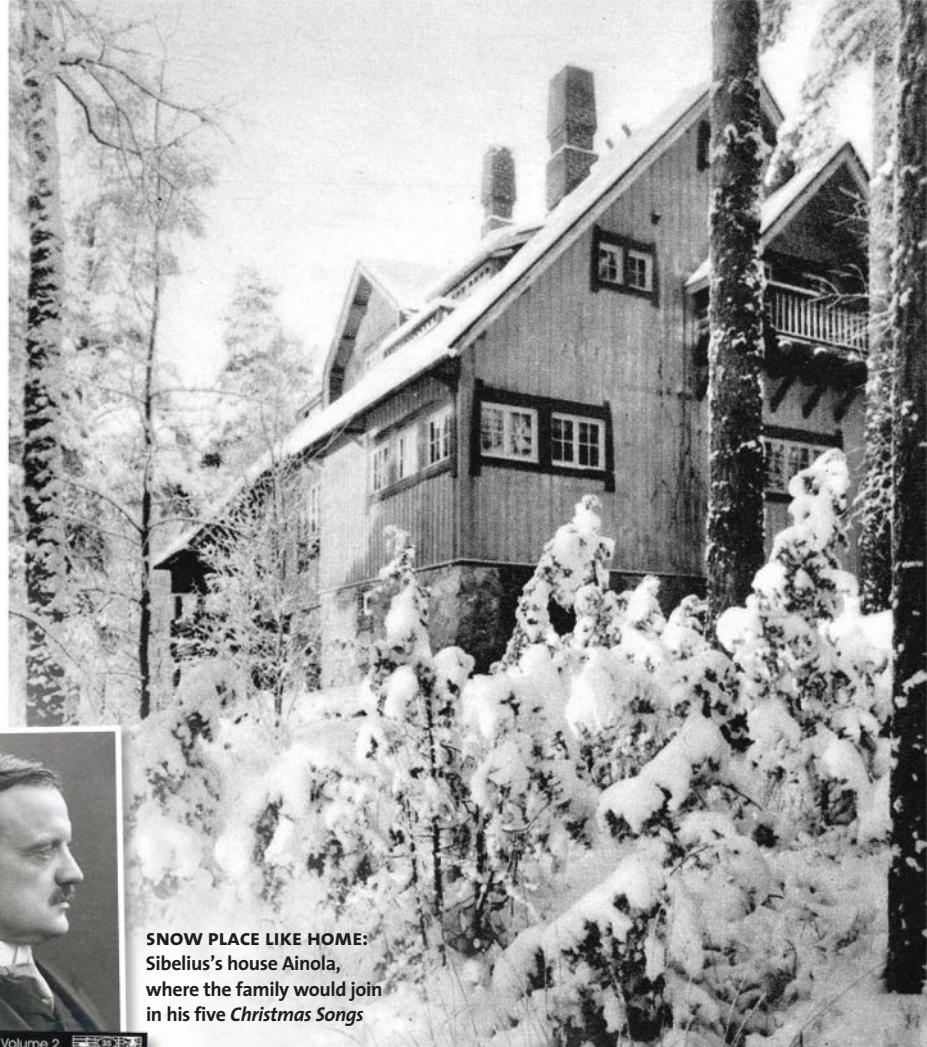
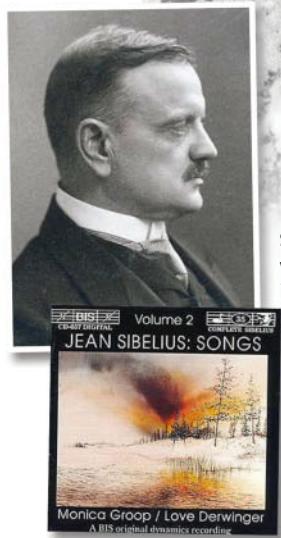
Geistliches Wiegenlied (1864)

Brahms welcomes a child to the world with warmth and affection

Brahms was good friends with the violinist Joseph Joachim for many years. When Joachim's son was born in 1864, he was named Johannes in honour of Brahms and, in return, the German composer wrote the 'Geistliches Wiegenlied' (Sacred Lullaby) for the new baby. Joachim Junior's present is a miniature masterpiece. Cast in a gently rocking 6/8 metre and in the pastoral key of F major, the song opens with a solo viola playing the medieval Christmas carol 'Joseph, lieber Joseph mein' – Brahms even includes the words in the score. The warm, dusky timbre of the viola is joined by the piano and alto – Johannes's mother was the contralto Amalie Weiss – who sings a German translation of a poem by the Spanish Renaissance poet Lope de Vega (1562-1635). While she sings a beautiful lullaby to 'the child of heaven', the viola weaves its own line, and echoes of the ancient carol are heard throughout this uniquely heartwarming work.

Recommended recording:

Alice Coote (mezzo), Maxim Rysanov (viola),
Ashley Wass (piano) *Onyx ONYX4054*



SNOW PLACE LIKE HOME:
Sibelius's house Ainola,
where the family would join
in his five *Christmas Songs*

LISZT

Christus (1873)

A glorious choral celebration, composed on an epic scale

Franz Liszt first toyed with the idea of writing an epic oratorio on the life of Christ while living in Weimar in 1853. However, composing such a work proved to be a much more fraught process than he had originally envisaged and, from the earliest sketches, *Christus* occupied his thoughts for the next 12 or so years. Even after finishing the score, Liszt felt resigned to the prospect that his magnum opus, a work lasting three hours and involving huge vocal and orchestral forces, would probably remain unperformed for many years. In fact, excerpts from the work were heard in Rome in 1867 and Vienna in 1871 (the latter featuring Bruckner as organist), and the first complete performance took place in Weimar in 1873, with Richard and Cosima Wagner among the attendees.

The opening part of *Christus* is entitled 'Christmas Oratorio' and is divided into five self-contained movements. A deeply contemplative polyphonic orchestral introduction, based on the plainchant 'Rorate coeli desuper' ('Drop down ye heavens from

above') is followed by a gentle *Pastorale* and *Annunciation of the Angels*, a hymn for chorus on the text 'Stabat mater speciosa' and the tender *Shepherds' Song at the Manger*. The final movement, entitled 'March of the Three Holy Kings', is much more outgoing – a brilliant piece of orchestral programme music with Hungarian inflections depicting the Three Wise Men following the Star of Bethlehem and placing their gifts before the baby Jesus.

Recommended Recording: Fanziska Hirzel etc; Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno, Beethoven Orchester Bonn/Roman Kofman *MDG MDG9371366*

SIBELIUS

Christmas Songs, Op. 1 (1897-1913)

Short but stylish simplicity, as first enjoyed in the Finnish composer's household itself

Sibelius's *Christmas Songs* might not be well known in England but in Finland two of them are firm yuletide favourites – 'Giv mig ej glans, ej guld, ej prak' ('Give me splendour, gold or pomp') and 'On hanget korkeat' ('High are the snowdrifts') are still sung across the country, reflecting the Sibelius family's own festive traditions at their house, Ainola. '[Sibelius] played "High are the snowdrifts", ▶

Swiss *movement*, English *heart*



C3 MALVERN CHRONOGRAPH MK II

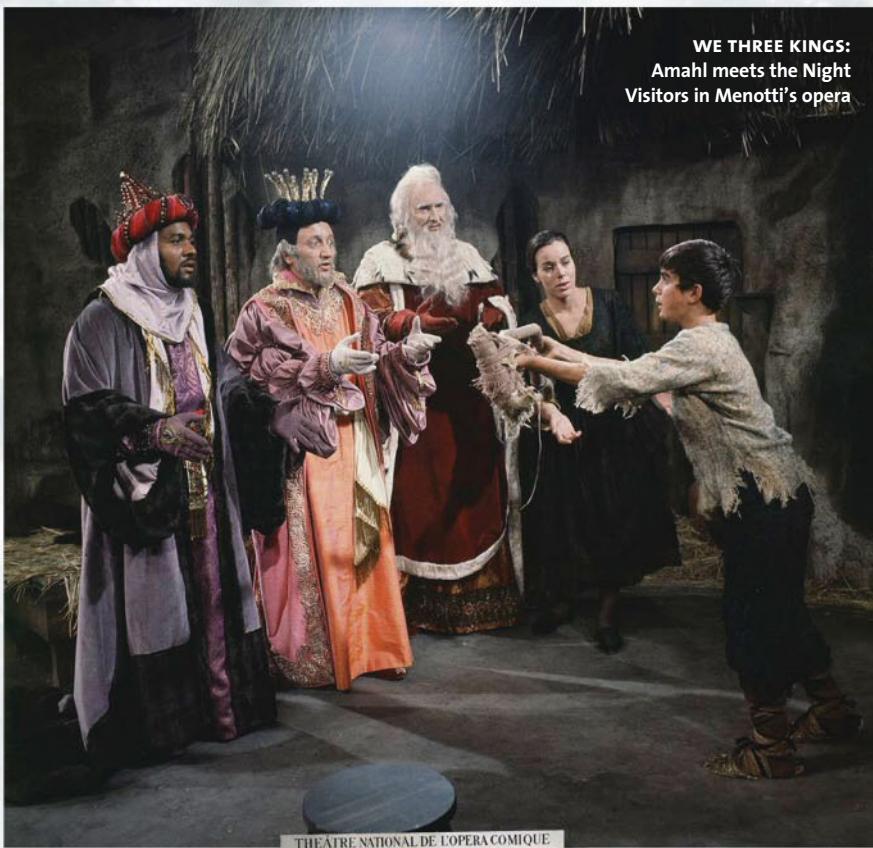
Swiss made / Quartz chronograph movement / 1/10th second split timing function / Hand finished 316L stainless steel case / Anti-reflective sapphire crystal / SuperLuminova™ hands and indices / Matt finish optic white one-piece dial / Italian leather strap with easy opening butterfly clasp / Diameter: 39mm / Calibre: Ronda 5040.D

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THE SNOW MUST GO ON

Five operas set around the Christmas period



WE THREE KINGS:
Amahl meets the Night
Visitors in Menotti's opera

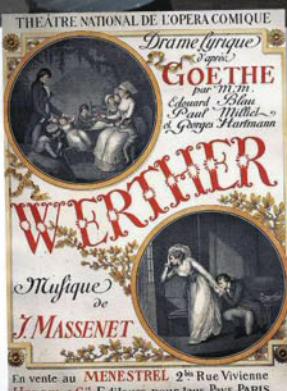
Tchaikovsky
Cherevichki (1876)
Inspired by Gogol's
Christmas Eve (as was
Rimsky-Korsakov's
Christmas Eve – see p50)
Tchaikovsky's opera tells
how Vakula, a smith, flies
on the devil's back to St
Petersburg. There he gets
hold of the empress's
leather boots, as requested
by the beautiful Oksana,
with whom he is smitten.
On his return, Oksana then tells him she loves
him anyway, boots or no boots. How typical.

Massenet *Werther* (1892)

Oh dear. As we hear children joyfully singing 'Noel' at the end of Massenet's opera, inside the study of Albert's house Werther lies dying, the result of self-inflicted gunshot wounds. Though not the way one would ideally want to spend Christmas Eve, he is at least consoled by Charlotte revealing that it is he, not Albert, she loves. All a bit late, really.

Pfitzner *Das Christ-Elflein* (1906)

Opera does not get much more sentimental than Hans Pfitzner's festive tale. A little elf learns about the miracle of Christmas from



the Christ-child himself. As he does so, the elf selflessly volunteers to swap places with a terminally ill girl, who recovers. Pfitzner's lush score has more than a touch of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* to it.

Menotti *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (1951)

Hieronymous Bosch's painting *The Adoration of the Magi* was the inspiration for Gian

Carlo Menotti's charming tale about Amahl, a disabled boy who meets the Three Wise Men. When, with nothing else to give the new-born Jesus, Amahl offers his crutch, he is immediately healed. The opera has become something of a festive favourite in the US.

Hindemith

The Long Christmas Dinner (1960)

Hindemith's final opera portrays 90 years of Christmas dinners being celebrated by the Bayards, a family living in the US Midwest from 1840-1930. Except 'celebrated' is not really the word. During the opera's one-act course, the family members get drunk, quarrel, grow depressed and, in a variety of ways, die. Jolly stuff.

and he played so loud, with the pedal down as if he were playing the organ,' remembers his granddaughter Laura. 'This was all very jolly.' Sibelius grouped the five songs together in 1915 as his Opus 1, but they were written at various points between 1897 and 1913. Four of the songs are settings of texts by Zacharias Topelius and one by Wilkku Joukahainen. Sibelius made several arrangements of 'Give me splendour', the most popular of the group, for different choral forces.

Recommended recording: Monica Groop (mezzo), Love Derwinger (piano) *BIS CD-657*

BARTÓK

Romanian Christmas Carols (1915)

The folk tradition lends a surprisingly fiery festive feel to Bartók's sets for solo piano

Prior to World War I, Bartók was intensively involved in collecting and transcribing folk music in the region of Transylvania. Among the material that most fascinated him was a collection of *colinde* (Romanian Christmas Carols) which were performed by groups of male carol singers that traditionally visited various houses in their own village on Christmas Eve. These carols were very

Romanian carols
were often fiery and
quite aggressive

different in character and temperament to their Western equivalents, being often fiery and quite aggressive and employing irregular metrical patterns. Although most of the texts were directly connected to Christmas themes, Bartók noted that some depicted legends stretched back to the pagan era.

In 1915 he arranged 20 of these *colinde* for piano into two equally balanced sets. The melodies are decorated with typically pungent harmonisations and Bartók exploits their rhythmic complexities in a sequence which incorporates strikingly varied tempos and contrasting tonalities. In essence, the work represents an early 20th-century equivalent to the waltz movements composed by his great predecessors Schubert and Brahms.

Recommended recording: Zoltán Kocsis (piano) *Hungarton HCD 32527*

SCHOENBERG

Weihnachtsmusik (1921)

Schoenberg takes a break from stark serialism for the more convivial pleasures of Christmas

It was a long-standing tradition in the Schoenberg household for the family to make ►

music together, particularly during the Christmas holidays. In 1921, the year when he was well on the way to formulating his system of composition with 12 notes, the great man decided to take time off from these rigours by composing a work with a specifically festive theme. The result was the enchanting *Weihnachtsmusik* for two violins, cello, harmonium and piano. In stark contrast to the tortured chromaticism of the *Fünf Stücke für Klavier*, which he was writing during this period, *Weihnachtsmusik* is conceived in the key of C major. It is essentially a somewhat idiosyncratic fantasia on Christmas carols which opens with a beautiful harmonisation of the Praetorius's carol 'Es ist ein' Ros' entsprungen'. Already from the outset, hints of the even more familiar carol 'Stille Nacht' percolate the texture. Indeed, the way in which he manages to combine these two melodies later on in the work in contrapuntal dialogue is ingenious and deeply affecting.

Recommended recording: Arditti Quartet *Naïve MO782160* (download only)

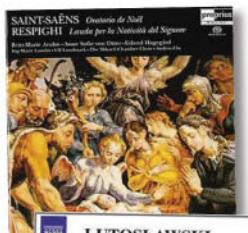
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

On Christmas Night (1926)

What the Dickens? Vaughan Williams brings Ebenezer Scrooge to life on the ballet stage

Agnostic he may have been, but Vaughan Williams embraced the spirit of Christmas with unbridled enthusiasm. His 1954 festive cantata *Hodie* still receives occasional performances, as does his unashamedly chocolate-boxy *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* from 1912. And then, from 1926, there's his Dickens-inspired ballet *On Christmas Night*, which, rather sadly, has itself disappeared into the deep dark night. Written in collaboration with Adolf Bolm, one of the leading dancers and choreographers of his generation, *On Christmas Night* tells the familiar story of Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, beginning with his creepy encounter with the ghost of Marley and rounded off with the joyful reconciliation with friends and family, accompanied here by an exuberant rendition of 'The First Nowell'. There are other glimpses of familiar fare along the way, including an off-stage Watchman singing 'Past Three o'Clock', but the majority is Vaughan Williams's own handiwork. It is all very colourful, occasionally dramatic and ultimately heartwarming.

Recommended recording: Joyful Company of Singers; City of London Sinfonia/Richard Hickox *Chandos CHAN 10385*



RESPIGHI

Lauda per la Natività del Signore (1930)

Wandering shepherds meet celestial angels in an old-world ambience

Respighi's best-known Christmas-related music is heard in his 1927 *Trittico botticelliano*, whose central movement, 'Adoration of the Magi', plays on a theme of 'Veni, veni Emanuel'. But three years later came the choral work that the Italian described as his 'personal Christmas card to the world'.

Setting words by the 13th-century priest Jacopone da Todi, *Lauda per la Natività* portrays the Virgin Mary, shepherds and angels expressing their wonder at the birth of Christ – in music that aptly wanders between pastoral and ethereal, as weaving melodies from the woodwind and vocal soloists lead us from one celestial choral moment to the next. Respighi could rarely resist indulging his fascination with the music of centuries past, and *Lauda per la Natività* is no exception – the old-world ambience that permeates so much of his output works its magic here too.

Recommended recording: Britt-Marie Aruhn (soprano) etc; The Mikaeli Chamber Choir/Anders Eby *Proprius PRSACD9057*

LUTOSLAWSKI

Twenty Polish Christmas Carols (1946)

Charming, cheering carol settings that were born from the least likely of circumstances

In 1946, Poland had barely begun recovering from the shellshock and cultural despoliation of the wartime period. The country was also confronting a hard reality: the unyielding Communist dogma of the new regime controlling it. For Witold Lutosławski this meant suppressing the elements of modernity in his music in favour of the populist approach favoured by Social Realist policies. The happy outcome of these unhappily constraining circumstances was one of his most charming, easily approachable compositions – the *Twenty Polish Christmas Carols*, written to a commission from the Polish Music Publishing company. The carols were drawn from a collection published a century earlier, and their tunes are for the most part unfamiliar outside Poland. Lutosławski's settings are full of interesting harmonic detail and typically crystalline orchestration – 'more on the level of miniature compositional studies than mere arrangements,' as one commentator has put it. And sublimely beautiful they are too.

Recommended recording: Polish Radio Chorus and National Radio SO/Antoni Wit *Naxos 8.555994* ■

SHORT BUT SWEET

Five festive stocking fillers



LITTLUNS: Strauss aged six and (below) Elgar

J Haydn *Parvulus Filius* (c1800)

Was this really by Haydn, or possibly by his contemporary Franz Schneider? It's not exactly clear. Whoever the composer was, he produced a three-minute motet that, scored for singers, strings, organ and two horns and cast in a sunny A major, positively bounces along with genial Christmas spirit.

R Strauss *Weihnachtslied* (1870)

At an age when most children are leaping around giddily at the prospect of Santa and co, the six-year-old Richard Strauss instead sat down to write this little song for voice and piano. Setting festive words by Christian Schubart, it is about a minute long, surprisingly sophisticated, and really rather delightful.

Fauré *Noël* (1885)

Over a bustling piano part, a soprano soloist breathlessly tells about the star guiding the Three Wise Men to the baby Jesus. The excitement builds over two minutes until at the end, we reach a climax with the joyful words 'This child will be your king!'

Elgar *A Christmas Greeting* (1908)

A collaboration in miniature from Team Elgar – the music is by Edward, the words by his wife Alice – *A Christmas Greeting* is scored for high voices, violins and piano. Sharp-eared listeners will spot a reference to Handel's *Messiah* in a five-minute work that is otherwise unmistakably Elgarian.

Debussy *Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons* (1915)

Here's the other side of Christmas. 'The Christmas of children who no longer have homes' is, as the title suggests, a bitter swipe at how Debussy's country has been blighted by German invasion – the anger that soprano soloist and pianist pack into the song's two-and-a-half minutes is unmistakable.



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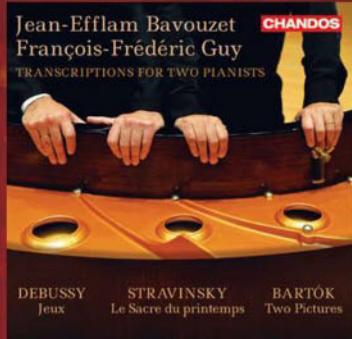
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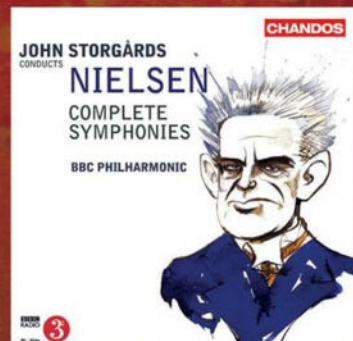


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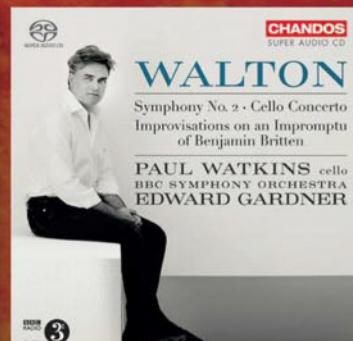
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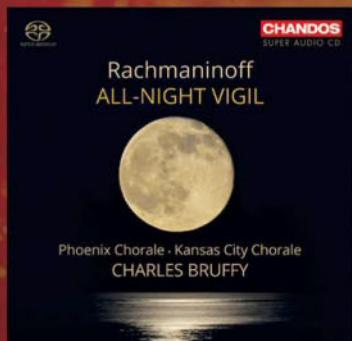
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THE JAMES NAUGHTIE INTERVIEW

MICHAEL MORPURGO



As part of this year's Britten-inspired 'Friday Afternoons', the author of *War Horse* and former Children's Laureate has written a moving and intimate poem as the text to be set by aspiring young composers

PHOTOGRAPHY RICHARD CANNON

Michael Morpurgo is waiting to hear a song about his parents at their moment of crisis.

The children's writer and former Children's Laureate, author of dozens of best-selling books and the creator of *War Horse*, which has had a triumphant world tour as a theatre production, has this year become part of one of the most innovative musical opportunities for young people in the country. He's written the words, and he's waiting for the music.

'I have no idea what they'll do with it, but it's a wonderful opportunity and so brave. That, of course, is what Benjamin Britten was.'

Friday Afternoons was established in Britten's centenary year, 2013, in Aldeburgh, its name taken from the composer's cycle of 12 songs for children written in the early 1930s. On the day that would have been his 100th birthday, more than 100,000 children in this country and across the world sang the songs in celebrations, and it was the start of a remarkable project.

Young choirs and singing groups have become part of a network that encourages the participation in music-making by young people that was such a vital strand of Britten's life. 'I believe that an artist should be part of his community, should work for it, with it and be used by it.' Those words, which have become famous, are, in part, a commitment

MICHAEL MORPURGO



MANE PART: Morpurgo and War Horse in 2013

Early years: Born on 5 October 1943, he attended schools in London, Sussex and Canterbury, before entering the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as a cadet.

Starting Out: He studied English and French at London University, then became a primary school teacher in Kent.

Development: He has now written over 100 books for children of all ages. In 2007 his novel *War Horse* was adapted for stage by the National Theatre, and in 2011 it was made into a feature film, directed by Stephen Spielberg.

Awards: He became Children's Laureate in 2003 and in 2006 was promoted to Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to literature.

to the musical education of children, which is what Friday Afternoons is doing year-round in a variety of ways.

But November is a special month for the project. Hundreds of children will come to Snape Maltings, Britten's own concert hall, to sing together and, in particular, to hear the song setting that is this year's competition. It's about that song that I talk to Michael Morpurgo, and in a way it's a conversation about the nature of inspiration.

The poem to be set is called *Waves of Time*, and subtitled 'A Song of Southwold'. The origin is deep in Michael's past. Near the end of the Second World War, his mother wrote to his father, who'd been fighting in Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. She told him that she had met someone else and the marriage might be over. Michael was two at the time. But his father, whom he describes as 'a beautiful, sweet and gentle man,' asked for a last chance to put things right.

'He rushed back to see if he could recover the situation. They spent a week cycling around Suffolk, which is where they may have been happiest – as actors they had once been together in the theatre at the end of Southwold pier, and they were happy days. Give me a week, he said, and we'll try. So they went to all the places they'd been to, where they'd been happy, but it didn't work. Now that's a short story, I suppose. But it's also a song.'



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CHILD'S PLAY:
Morpurgo at the Hay Literary
Festival with Camilla,
Duchess of Cornwall

*And the reeds whisper:
They came this way, trod these stones,
Seeking never finding, seeking never finding.
Tried but lost their way.
And was the sea this soupy brown?
And did the wind sigh so sad?*

That refrain has a melancholy that Michael associates with much of Britten's music, which moves him a great deal.

So how did he go about writing the song?

'I needed to find some hook to make it work for me, as with any story. They helped at Friday Afternoons, wondering if I could connect it with that part of East Anglia. As it happens, I was brought up on the Essex coast so I do know the flatlands, and the big skies and that brown sea that you will never get in Cornwall or the west.' I suggest that it was territory that Dickens knew so well, and we recall one of the opening lines in *Great Expectations*: 'Ours was the marsh country...'

'So there was a childhood memory, and the bleak fact that it was where my father tried to talk my mother out of leaving him, and failed.'

Not surprisingly, the poem is about loss:
*I wander the streets, the pier and the beaches,
As they must have done,
Ride out through the corn,
see larks on the wing,
As they must have done.*

We talk about English song, which he loves. 'It so often tells of an innocence gone, which is irretrievable, and which I do associate with that landscape. There is a lot there that goes musically with that kind of song – the sighing of the wind through the reedbeds, and the bird cries – and it is a cry, not a song. In my garden in Devon the birds genuinely do chirp

and sing. But by the sea, there's something different. They cry.'

'It's wild there – it still is. If you walk from Southwold to Aldeburgh, you go through the reeds and the tributaries of those rivers and it's most extraordinary. Then you step inland, and come out into the lanes and the villages and churches. The churches, of course, are wonderful.'

So the inspiration for the words comes from a response to a landscape that Britten

'When I hear a great violinist, I wish I had stuck with it'

himself inhabited. What does he think the children should do with it? Anyone entering the competition has free rein. The words must be sung in some fashion: that's all.

'Of course there should be moments of silence. And perhaps solo instruments. Maybe an oboe. The simple human voice, with not too rich a backing. There's delicacy in the poem, I think, and I hope that the music will complement that rather than take over. It would be easy to overwhelm it.'

Think about tackling a song setting. We talk about how important it is to feel the weight of the emotion: this isn't flotsam washed up on the beach. It's serious. 'I hope there is reassurance here as well as sadness. And it's very important that there is no blame. I find that very interesting in how the poem



FRIDAYS FEELING:
Morpurgo and Naughtie
discuss the music of Britten

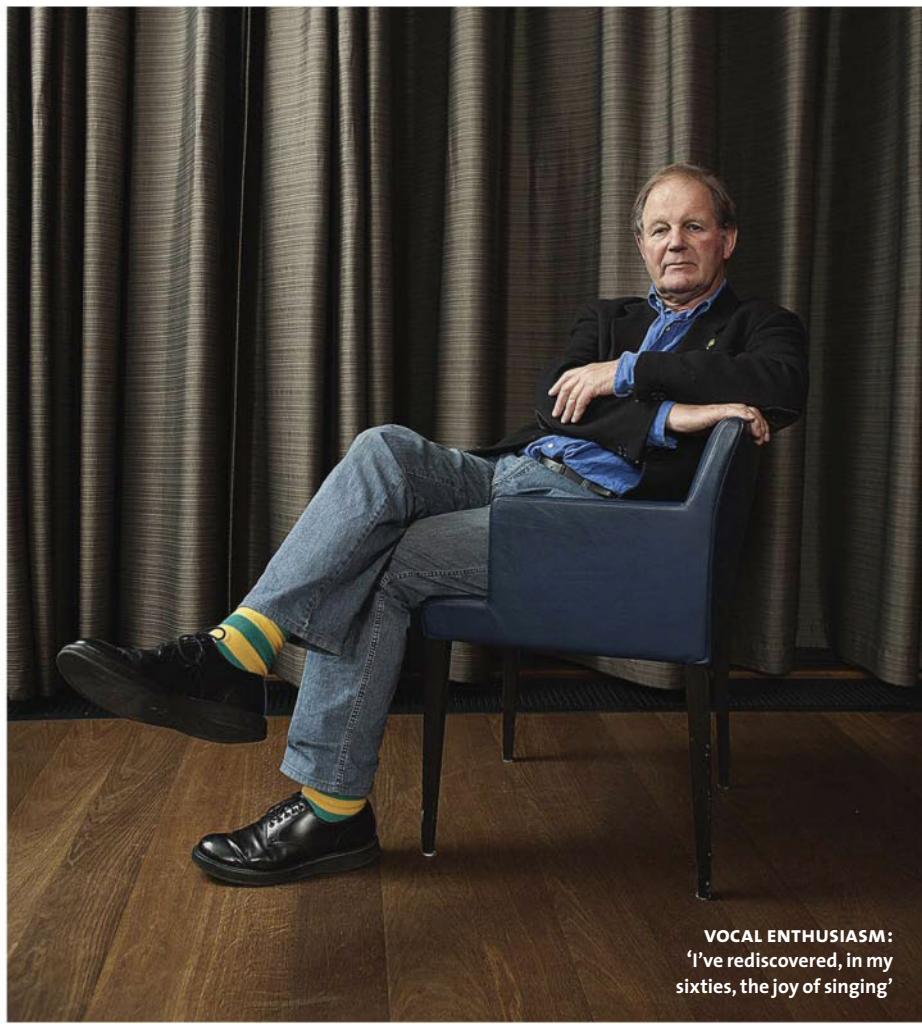
has turned out, because there's no point in not acknowledging that family events like this leave a residue of pain. Of course they do. But I would want my half-brother and half-sister to hear it. I want it to be hopeful.'

Friday Afternoons is a project that's vast in scale. Dozens of singing groups around the country are involved in its work, for which this year the American composer Nico Muhly has written a set of eight songs which have been circulated through the year, and will be given a special performance on 20 November, with singers taking part around the world. It's easy to join in, through the easily accessible Friday Afternoons website, where people have the opportunity to participate as singer, conductor composer or song-setter.

Championing such inspiration is so important. Michael leads his own life as a writer being a kind of Pied Piper, around whom hordes of children gather wherever he is reading or speaking. Funnily enough he produced his own version of the poem, set to music by Colin Matthews, which was given a performance at the Southbank Centre with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Vladimir Jurowski – 'a terrifying experience with me reading the poem with the orchestra, and being unable to read music.' He's also collaborating with the composer Rachael Portman on what may become an operatic treatment of his First World War novel, *Private Peaceful*.

This leads to a confession. As a very young boy Michael took up the violin, but had a teacher at school with whom he didn't get on. He reached Grade One after six years – 'and not even with merit, so that was the end of that' – which he deeply regrets. 'When I hear a great violinist I wish so much that I had stuck with it. But we all have regrets. Never mind.'

Later, at the King's School, Canterbury, he was fortunate to come under the spell of an



VOCAL ENTHUSIASM:
 'I've rediscovered, in my
 sixties, the joy of singing'

inspirational music master, Edred Wright. 'He had a wonderful facility for encouraging the brilliant ones, but he also had the gift of managing to encourage those who were not so great to be part of it, too. I was in the choir and chorus. We sang in the cathedral. I think it was the most formative thing at my school.'

Another confession follows, from one of our most celebrated writers for young people. 'I'm more moved by music than by literature. I find music gets to me physically in a way that even great literature can't. I'm moved to tears in a way that doesn't happen with a book.'

In particular, by Mozart. 'I am very connected to him, and I suppose it may be something of a problem. I've never grown out of him since I heard the horn concertos in the 1950s on the EMI LPs with Dennis Brain.' Among the operas, *The Magic Flute* is his favourite, which is hardly surprising for an artist with an imagination as flexible and colourful as Michael's, always ready for invention and dreaming.

And those up-and-down musical experiences at school have passed away. He performs from time to time with a folk group,

and is boyish in his enthusiasm. 'I'm generally reading a story and they're singing... but when they're kind, they let me join in! That's what makes it great. I've rediscovered in my mid-sixties the joy of singing. It's one of the real sadnesses of my life that I enjoyed it at school and left it. And I now find myself with these wonderful people who're singing the songs

**'I'm more moved
 by music than I am
 by great literature'**

they love, and want me to join.

'I think it's the only time when I totally suspend any ego. You're making a sound with other people, and it just goes completely. It is the most wonderful thing.'

This brings us back to music-making at Aldeburgh, the poem, Friday Afternoons and Britten. 'There are not many other composers who have children so centre stage, and I'm

very moved by that.' We talk about John Bridcut's remarkable BBC film (and book) *Britten's Children* and the understanding of innocence, and its loss, that infused such an important part of Britten's work.

'There was a fascination with children. Perhaps he was the boy who never grew up, and he understood the corruption of innocence, this awful thing that comes to all of us. It's dark, of course. I remember seeing *Turn of the Screw* at La Fenice in Venice where it was first performed, and it was moving to walk through Venice and think that this is where it came to life, focussing on what it was like to be a child and know darkness.'

He has always found his music strange, and sometimes difficult. 'More recently I've found it stirring in the sense that it stirs memories of my own childhood. He was a composer who was so rooted, and his rhythms and the palette of sounds pick up so much of what is real. He was clearly so moved by the music of country people, and I find that inspiring.'

We return to the poem *Sounds of Southwold*, and the excitement of a setting that will come from nowhere, written by a young person inspired by the words. There is no danger of this appearing to be a trite poem. A father tries to win back his wife, and his children:

What will I be without you there?

I have dreamed of nothing else.

What of the children, of home and hearth?

I have dreamed of nothing else.

Stay with me and be my love,

I have dreamed of nothing else.

If anyone needs further inspiration, consider this. Michael was two years old when that father left his life. He had left a message with his wife for the sons: if they ever wanted to see him, they should say so, and he would be there. In Michael's case it didn't happen until he was 25 years old.

But he did experience an extraordinary sighting as a young teenager, the first time he was conscious of having set eyes on his father. He was at home with his mother, watching a BBC black-and-white serial adaptation of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. In the famous scene in the graveyard near the beginning, young Pip is accosted by the convict, Magwitch. The boy Michael was gripped when the terrifying, ragged figure loomed up from behind a gravestone. His mother pointed to the screen. 'That's your father.' And it was, the actor Tony van Bridge.

Speak about sighing reed beds, the sound of the sea on the shingles, the bird cries...

Words that need special treatment, for Friday Afternoons. ■

For more about Friday Afternoons, visit the website at www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk



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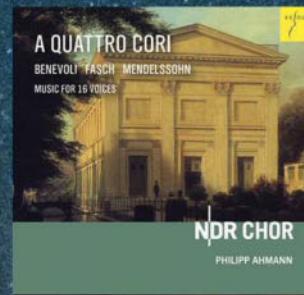


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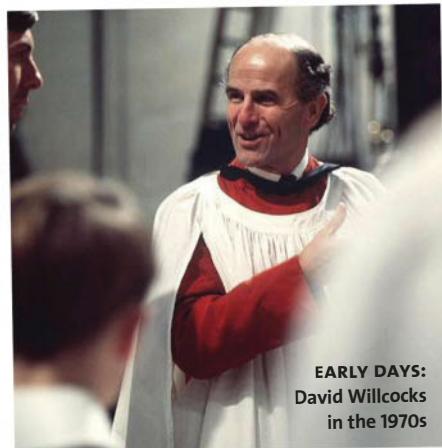
Sir David Willcocks

A CHORAL LEGEND

When conductor Sir David Willcocks died in September, the world lost a choral colossus. *Brian Kay*, who sang under Willcocks at King's College, Cambridge, in the 1960s, remembers his former choirmaster and mentor

The facts speak for themselves and are no less remarkable for that: Westminster Abbey chorister, music scholar at Clifton College, organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge, distinguished war service (Military Cross), organist of Salisbury and Worcester cathedrals, back to King's as organist and director of music, director of the Royal College of Music, conductor of the Bach Choir and The Really Big Chorus for nearly 40 years and much more besides. No wonder Sir David Willcocks will be remembered as the nation's choirmaster. His descants for 'O come, all ye faithful' and 'Hark! The herald angels sing' are as well known all over the world as the carols for which he wrote them and there can be few choirs globally which have not performed and enjoyed his incomparable carol arrangements.

But what of the man himself? I was lucky enough to fall under his magic spell back in 1962 when he awarded me a choral scholarship in his choir at King's and, along with countless students both there and at the Royal College in London, I was a grateful recipient of his inspirational leadership. His was a genuinely awesome presence, though much of the strength of our relationship was that he treated those in his charge with mutual respect: he had, after all, appointed each of us. He knew what he wanted from the choir at King's and with remarkable consistency he got it. He knew – we all knew – that people came from every corner of the globe to experience the chapel services at first



Sir David knew what he wanted from his choir – and he got it

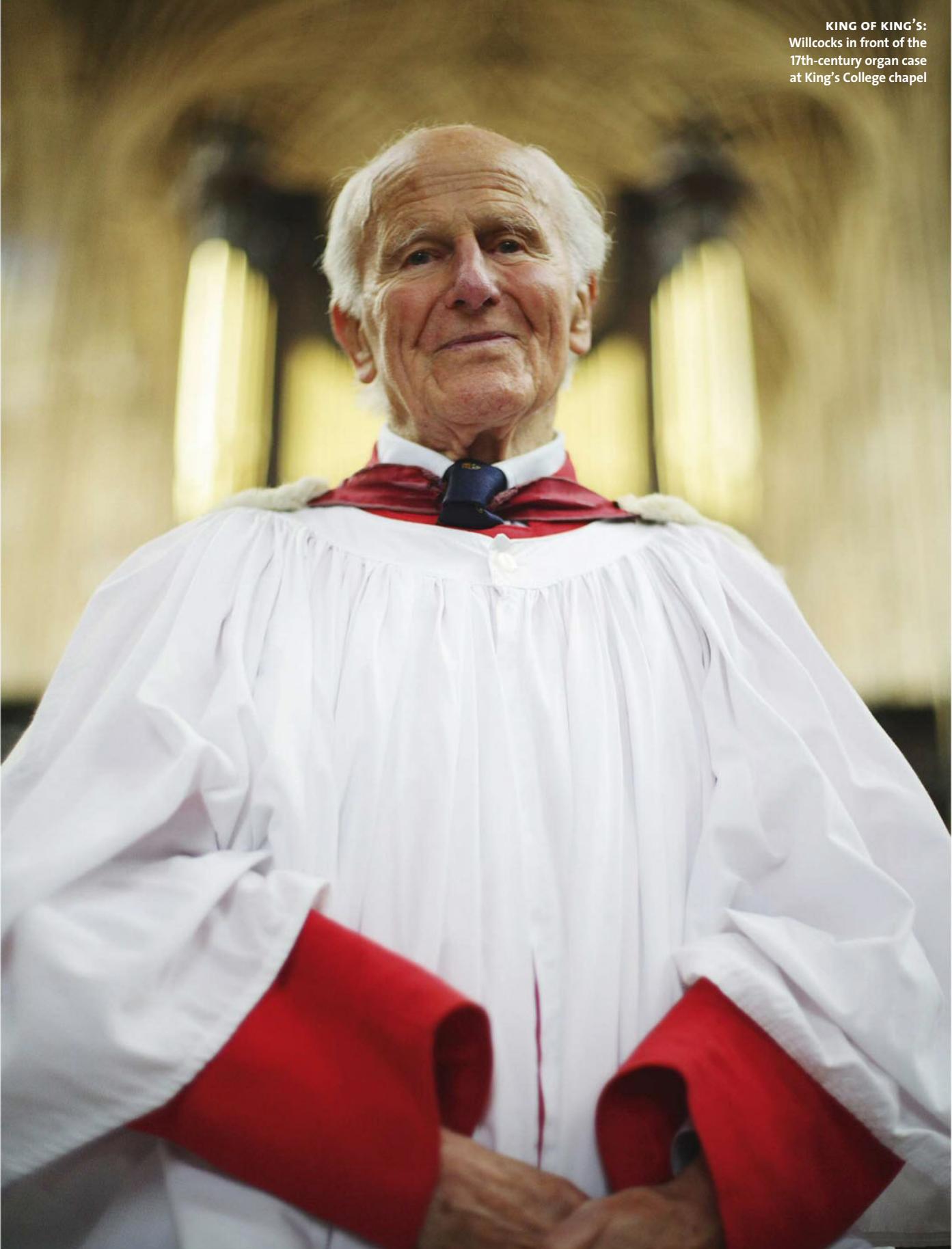
hand and that consequently 100 per cent was expected of us and nothing less would be acceptable, day after day.

I am often asked how he managed to achieve such high standards, whether facing professional forces or with the vast amateur choruses on which he made such an impression. As His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (himself a some-time member of the Bach Choir) mentions in his foreword to the book *A Life in Music – conversations with Sir David Willcocks and friends*, 'David has always

taken as much pride in bringing the best out of amateur musicians as working with world-class professionals.' Of course he treated amateurs more gently but there was, when required, an iron fist in his kid glove. All of us who work with amateur choirs learned so much from his example: how to plot our rehearsal time to best advantage; how to make each singer, however large the assembly, feel that he or she is a vital part of the big picture; how to amuse as well as to instruct and how to cajole any who are clearly finding things difficult. His main concern was that all singers should feel, at the end of a rehearsal or a workshop, that they had achieved something really worthwhile and he always managed to convince singers that they had sung better than they ever believed possible.

When I succeeded him as principal conductor of The Really Big Chorus I would have found conducting up to 4,000 singers in the Royal Albert Hall far more intimidating without being able to draw on his legacy. The speed of his reaction to any kind of problem and the way in which he dealt with it were object lessons in how to manage so vast a choral force. Seeing him work so brilliantly, and what seemed so calmly, greatly reduced any fear I might have felt by attempting to step into his voluminous shoes.

In trying to analyse his approach to choral singing, it comes down to basics of technique. He had perfect pitch and in his ideal world, so should everyone else. As this is clearly not the case, he must have suffered agonies of frustration with many of those (myself



KING OF KING'S:
Willcocks in front of the
17th-century organ case
at King's College chapel

SIR DAVID REMEMBERED



MY MENTOR: Roy Goodman with Willcocks

Roy Goodman (violinist and conductor; King's College treble, 1959-64)

'Sir David was very much a paternal figure for me as a chorister. Occasionally he might rap on his wooden lectern in dissatisfaction or frustration – intonation, diction, ensemble and blend were really important. As a chorister we had no vocal training. Everything had to be picked up "on the fly" from the older boys. We had to respond constantly to his conducting style – quickly reacting to either a raised finger, or both eyebrows up, if we were singing just a little "fleett". We fostered an inner "red light", admitting a mistake in rehearsal by raising a hand, so mistakes in performance were almost impossible. That training and discipline has been invaluable in my career.'

Sir Andrew Davis (conductor; King's College organ scholar, 1963-6)

'I went up to Cambridge in 1963 King's College organ scholar – I was absolutely terrified, but David was very encouraging. We used to have choir practice an hour before evensong, and I remember once I played a wrong chord. David didn't say anything at the time, but later came up to the organ loft and I apologised. "It's all right," he said, as I know he did to others, "we all do that – once". Despite the choir singing for six services a week, with two on Sundays, there was never any sense of "we don't feel like it today, let's not bother". Every service had to be perfect.'

John Rutter (composer; co-editor with Willcocks of *Carols for Choirs* 2, 3 & 4)

'When I was at Cambridge, David asked to look at some of my work, so in fear and trembling and I presented myself at his room in King's the following Monday and he looked through a pile which included the "Shepherd's Pipe Carol". He said "would you be interested in these being published?" – you don't turn that down! He tirelessly supported me and my work, even suggesting me as an editor for the second volume of *Carols for Choirs*. I can't pay enough tribute to his generosity in clasping me, the viper, to his bosom – there I was writing Christmas carols when that was his domain. He could have sent me packing.'

included) whose sense of intonation was not as impeccable as his own. His other driving force was rhythm: if he could occasionally be relentless in his pursuit of togetherness of rhythm, it was always crystal clear to a choir what he was hoping for and his ability to mould a disparate collection of amateur singers into a unified whole was second to none. Blend and balance were essential to him, as was unanimity of thought, through matched vowels and joint understanding of text.

One way of impressing and inspiring students is to be very good at it yourself and his own pre-eminence as an organist placed him in a unique position when it came to nurturing the talents of a succession of King's organ scholars, including such luminaries as Simon Preston and Andrew Davis. One of my outstanding memories of my time at King's was his accompaniment to the

psalms: at this he was the undisputed master, adding through his use of registration and counterpoint no end of fascination for all who sang or listened. A single word or thought in a verse would produce from the organ loft a little touch of magic – never overstated, but with a subtlety which focused our minds. He instilled in the boys and men of the choir an almost 'conversational' style with the words and this gave our singing of psalms a wonderful sense of flow and an easier route into the inner meaning of the text.

David had a system in rehearsals at King's whereby if you made a mistake, you immediately raised your hand in order to show him that you knew what you had done and that consequently he need not stop and

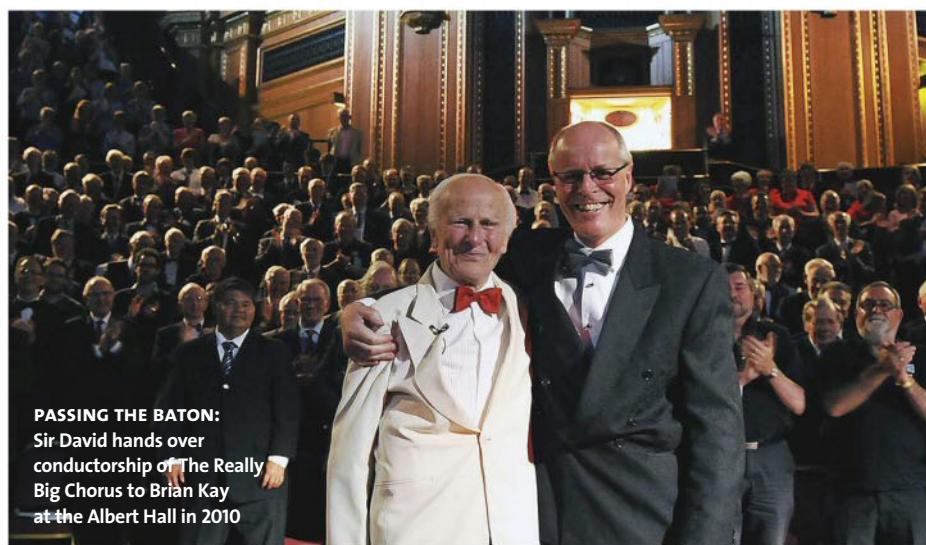
waste time putting it right. This had all to do with that feeling of trust between master and pupil. If, on the other hand, you took a wrong turning in a service, he expected you to report to the organ loft in order to own up and apologise. When I offered my own apology one day, he told me not to worry. 'Everyone,' he said, 'makes a mistake – once'!

Each year on Lammas Day (1 August), the college provided for David and the choral scholars a special seven-course breakfast, ending with a pint of exceptionally strong Audit Ale. As soon as he realised that we had eaten our fill – and then some – David would challenge each of us to a game of squash. His natural fitness was such that he thrashed us

all, with the exception of the countertenor Alastair Hume – later a King's Singers colleague of mine – who just happened to be Captain of the university squash team.

His inspirational presence greatly enriched our lives

King's choristers of all ages will have their favourite Willcocks stories, from his sitting on the floor with his back to the keyboard and playing the piano with his hands crossed above his head – a great party trick! – to his habit of humiliating a singer who was not watching him in rehearsal by putting a handkerchief on his head to see if the offender noticed. Most tales are told in affectionate imitation of his very distinctive voice, imitation being the highest form of flattery, not that he needed any of that. In remembering him today with great fondness, I am but one of so many who will for ever remain profoundly grateful for the way in which his inspirational presence so greatly enriched our lives. ■



PASSING THE BATON:
Sir David hands over
conductors of The Really
Big Chorus to Brian Kay
at the Albert Hall in 2010

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PIPES OF PEACE

One of the country's mightiest instruments, the King's College chapel organ is about to go silent for nine months. *Paul Riley* explains why

You could argue that it's one of the defining sounds of Christmas. Into the expectant December hush of a Cambridge chapel a lone treble steps forward to sing the opening verse of *Once in Royal David's City*. The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from King's has begun. 'Sweet singing in the choir' is, of course, a given here, but spare a thought for that other half of *The Holly and the Ivy*'s musical equation: 'the playing of the merry organ'. By the time the chapel's mighty instrument has rumbled through the

concluding Bach chorale prelude on *In dulci jubilo*, the mother of all Christmas presents awaits it this year – a major restoration costing north of £1m that will secure its future for another generation and beyond.

Organs are a bit like the Forth Bridge. Regular maintenance goes with the territory, and the King's instrument has had its fair share of interventions since the last major rebuild in 1968. But this time it's more than the equivalent of painting a few girders that's at stake. All the pipework (with the exception

of the 32' monsters too unwieldy to make the journey) will be removed to Durham, home of organ builders Harrison and Harrison, and a root-and-branch overhaul begins. 'It's a classy instrument,' says Harrison's current managing director Christopher Batchelor. 'The firm was responsible for creating the organ back in 1934, and legendary voicer Arthur Harrison described this instrument, together with those at Westminster Abbey and the Royal Albert Hall, as the pinnacles of his career. It's not just a period piece, though; it's evolved over time



CASE IN POINT:
the organ straddles the
chapel's nave and choir

with the input of successive directors of music, but the backbone is still there. It remains true to its history.'

Current director of music Stephen Cleobury agrees. 'When the organ was installed, its role as an accompanying instrument was paramount,' he explains. 'The smoothness of the blend and the sensitivity of the voicing made it a perfect fit with the choral sound. I'm very much struck that, when we go on tour, we might find ourselves singing in a purpose-built hall with a great symphonic organ that works beautifully as a recital instrument, but somehow it fails to speak sufficiently sensitively to the choir.'

Thomas Trotter, organ scholar at King's in the late 1970s and one of the most distinguished concert organists of his generation, knows all about 'speaking to the choir'. 'In my day,' he remembers, 'there was a set way of using the organ. You weren't allowed to play too loudly and the music arrived with all the registration marked in, so I'd find myself drawing the same stops that

KING'S COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE/BENJAMIN SHEEN/NICK RUTTER



MANUAL LABOUR:
Stephen Cleobury at the
King's organ console

Andrew Davis had used a decade or so earlier.' For Trotter, the glory of the organ isn't so much in its roar, however, as in its whisper: 'My favourite colours are the orchestral sounds such as the Cor Anglais, the French Horn and the lovely family of string stops.' As King's regulars will attest, it's a palette ideally suited to the intimacy of an Evensong.

They're sounds Stephen Cleobury will reluctantly have to learn to live without for the nine months of the refurbishment. Not for him, though, the convenient blandishments

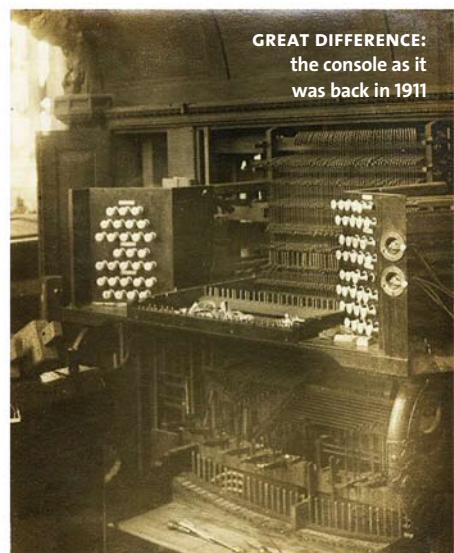
**'It'll still be the organ
everyone knows and
loves. Just better!'**

of an electronic stand-in. 'We've got the new three-stop Klop chamber organ and a piano, so it's just going to require extra ingenuity on my part in choosing the music. There'll be more *a cappella* psalm-singing certainly, but aesthetically, introducing a digital alternative for the duration just wouldn't feel right.'

Back in the organ loft, while the absent pipes are being hoovered to within an inch of their lives to remove 30 years of accumulated dust, Christopher Batchelor's team can give the imposing 17th-century case a thorough appraisal ahead of a reconfiguration of the layout that should benefit both the player and the overall sound of the instrument in the chapel. 'Essentially, we're creating a new infrastructure as well as ensuring everything is in good repair,' says Batchelor. 'With the pipework speaking freely, the King's sound

should still be instantly recognisable. It's just that it'll be fresher – a bit like allowing the original colours to emerge when an old picture is cleaned.' It'll still be the organ everyone knows and loves,' adds Stephen Cleobury. 'Just better!'

As it happens, Cleobury will be well placed to judge the 'before and after'. He recently brought out the first surround-sound CD of the instrument on the College's own record label – a no-holds-barred test of organ and organist including Liszt's mighty *Fantasia on 'Ad nos ad salutarem undam'* and Reubke's *Sonata on the 94th Psalm*. Any successor is bound to make for some interesting comparisons. One thing's for sure, though: when the shadows lengthen, and an ethereal 'Once in Royal David's' again floats up into the vaulting in 2016, the organ will be at its merriest for years. ■



GREAT DIFFERENCE:
the console as it
was back in 1911

Exclusive
carol written
for you!

Good Day, Sir Christemas!

Following the resounding response to our carol commission last Christmas, we've asked the leading composer *Cheryl Frances-Hoad* to follow suit with a setting of her own choice. Here she introduces her brilliant new choral piece

When *BBC Music Magazine* asked me to compose a new carol for their Christmas issue, I was thrilled. My main goal was to write something unashamedly jolly – to my ear, the reds and greens of Christmas time are associated with the keys of G minor and E minor, often resulting in me writing pensive carols about Mary and the baby Jesus, so I wanted a change!

My first port of call was the blog by A Clerk of Oxford (aclerkofoxford.blogspot.co.uk) where I found the Old English text 'Good Day, Sir Christemas', probably the merriest of all medieval carols texts. It was exactly what I was looking for for my F major-rooted setting – to me a golden brown-coloured key,



FESTIVE NOTES: composer Cheryl Frances-Hoad

the aural equivalent of a pint of deep amber Christmas ale or of rustic wooden floorboards upon which a night of eating, drinking and dancing could take place... The text comes from the Selden Carol Book, compiled in the 15th century, probably at the cathedral priory at Worcester, 'a house where there was much carolling' according to one visitor. In terms of inspiration, I had 'A Partridge in a Pear Tree' in the back of my mind while writing: I liked the idea of adding increasingly long passages of 'Good day's' throughout the carol. It has since been pointed out to me that my carol has a small resemblance to Walton's 'What Cheer', which is wonderful, but accidental! *To learn more about Frances-Hoad, visit cherylfraanceshoad.co.uk and cadenza-music.com*

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Cheryl Frances-Hoad's guide to performing her new work

THE MAIN THING with this carol is to have fun! I imagine the beginning (and all of the 'Good day' passages) to be the singers welcoming not just Sir Christemas but each other to the choir, so the more 'conversational' the performance the better. If (in bars 38-41, for instance) you'd like to make some of the 'Good day's' for soloists, this could be an option – and the one at the end of bar 39 in the bass could be sung as if Sir Christemas finally bids good day back to the choir.

Throughout the carol you can make the most of the changes in time signature, particularly in bars 6 and 7 – emphasising the dotted crochet and crochet pulses will add a fabulous jauntiness. Do make the most of the false relations that occur throughout the carol – enjoy, for example, the dissonances in bar 19 (between soprano and tenor) and 22 (between soprano and bass). I've put asterisks by the dynamics in bars 4 and 17 – when this music is revisited in verses four and five, feel free to ramp the volume up to *f* and *più f* respectively!

The structure of the carol is confusing on paper, so to clarify: sing from the beginning until the end of the note in bar 37 (omitting bars 15-16), then, on what would be the fourth

beat of bar 37, sing from the sign (upbeat to bar 4) until the end of bar 26 (omitting bar 14). From here go straight to the coda at the beginning of bar 38, and from there to the end! I like the final bars sung with very little *ritenuto*, but this is music to have fun with, so if it pleases you to *accelerando* through the tongue-twister that is bar 41, or slow dramatically down in the final bar, the choice is yours! *We do hope you'll include 'Good Day, Sir Christemas' in your carol service or concert. Do photocopy the music or download the PDF from classical-music.com and share widely! We'd love to hear/see your performances, so please send any audio or video files to music@classical-music.com. Enjoy your carol!*

Good Day, Sir Christemas!

From the Selden Carol Book,
15th Century English

For the readers of BBC Music Magazine

CHERYL FRANCES-HOAD

Allegro giocoso (♩ = c. 112)

SOPRANO ALTO

TENOR BASS

VERSES 1 & 4

Good day, good day, my lord Sir Christemas, good day! Good day, Sir Christemas our
Of your co - ming the clerks

Good day, good day, my lord Sir Christemas, good day! Good day, Sir Christemas our
Of your co - ming the clerks

S. A. 5
king, (good day) For e - vry man, both old and young, Is glad and blithe for your
find: (good day) Ye come to save all man - kind, And of their sor - rows, them un -

T. B. 5
king, (good day) For e - vry man, both old and young, Is glad and blithe for your
find: (good day) Ye come to save all man - kind, And of their sor - rows, them un -

S. A. 9 (3+4)
co - ming; Good day, good day! Good day! Good day! Good
bind: Good day, good day!

T. B. 9
co - ming; Good day, good day! Good day! Good day! Good

VERSE 1 END **VERSE 4 END**

S. A. 13
day, my lord Sir Christemas, good day!, day!

T. B. 13
day, my lord Sir Christemas, good day!, day!

VERSES 2 & 5

S. A. 17
God's Son so great of might, From hea - ven to earth down is a - light, And
All man-ner of miirths we make, And so - lace to our hearts take, My

T. B. 17
God's Son so great of might, From hea - ven to earth down is a - light, And
All man-ner of miirths we make, And so - lace to our hearts take, My

EXCLUSIVE NEW CAROL **GOOD DAY, SIR CHRISTMAS!**

2

21

S. A. *f*
born is of a maid so bright; Good day, good day! Good day! Good day! Good

T. B. *f*
born is of a maid so bright; Good day, good day! Good day! Good day!

26

S. A. *mf* *mp* *poco rit.* *f*
day! Good day! Good day! Good day, my lord Sir Christe - mas, good day! Good day!

T. B. *mf* *mp* *f*
Good day! Good day! Good day, my lord Sir Christe - mas, good day! Good day!

VERSE 3
a tempo

30

S. A. *più f* *mf* *poco rit.*
Hea-ven and earth and al - so hell, And all that e - ver in them dwell,

T. B. *più f* *mf*
Hea-ven and earth and al - so hell, And all that e - ver in them dwell,

34

S. A. *mp* *mf* *f* *D.S. al Coda (mp)*
Of your co - ming they are full snelle; Good day, good day! Good day! Good

T. B. *mf* *f* *mp*
Of your co - ming they are full snelle; Good day, good day! Good day! Good day!

39

S. A. *poco rit.* *a tempo* *p* *f*
day! Good day! Good day, good day my lord Sir Christe - mas, good day! Good day!

T. B. *p* *f*
Good day! Good day! Good day, good day my lord Sir Christe - mas, good day! Good day!

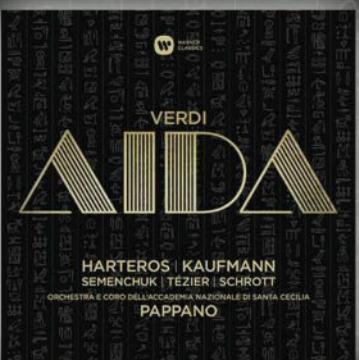


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BEST OF THE YEAR

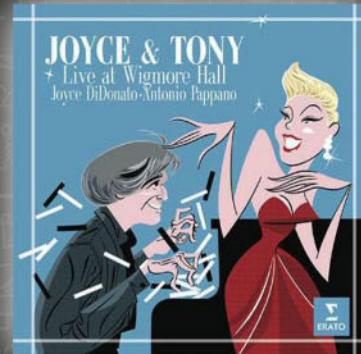
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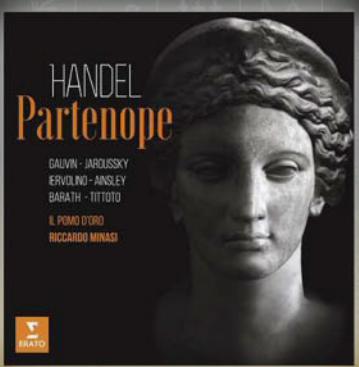
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THE GREAT £100 INSTRUMENT CHALLENGE

Is it possible to pick up a decent second-hand instrument for under a ton? As Christmas approaches, *BBC Music Magazine* goes on a musical bargain hunt

Buying an instrument is, after lessons, usually a musician's biggest outlay. A good trumpet can start at around £500, oboes can set you back thousands and you can easily spend as much on a house as a violin (bow not included). Of course, many young beginners borrow instruments from school while others take out loans. But, we wondered, with Christmas fast approaching and our wallets slightly thinner at this time of year, is there a cheaper way to own, say, a clarinet? Is it possible to snap up a viola for next

to nothing? To find out, we set about trawling charity shops, antiques fairs, junk shops and the internet in our hunt for fine specimens at rock-bottom prices. And they had to be rock-bottom because we armed each member of *BBC Music Magazine*'s editorial team with a paltry £100, supplemented with fine negotiating skills. So how did we get on? We invited the professional players of Bristol Ensemble to rate our finds, in terms of their quality, playability and value for money. The results surprised us, if not always in a good way...



ANTIQUES FAIR

Oliver Condy Editor

THE SEARCH

Taunton Antique Fair opens its doors the first Monday of each month – tens of thousands of assorted bits of junk, bric-a-brac and the odd antique are crammed into its two sprawling floors. It's not even a complete certainty where each stall starts and finishes, so anything you pick up to buy isn't necessarily sold by who you think it is. Musical instruments aren't exactly crawling out of the woodwork when I visit, and my requests for 'anything, really' are met with 'I sold a zither last week' or 'we haven't had an instrument in for months'. Still, in the two hours I'm here, I'm offered a dilapidated fortepiano that has been converted into a clavichord (presumably to appease the neighbours) and a rusty Jew's harp, before I stumble across a clarinet poking out from the bottom shelf of an old bathroom shelving unit. It's on sale for £40, I'm told, because the leather case it comes in is quite nice. Which says a lot for the clarinet itself. I eventually get the seller down to £30.



fumigation, is indeed lovely. I take the clarinet to a woodwind dealer for closer inspection, whereupon an amused sales assistant points out that the key system is archaic and its pitch too sharp for ensemble work. 'I wouldn't waste your time' are, I think, his exact words.

TOTAL COST: £30

BRISTOL ENSEMBLE'S VERDICT

'This is a "simple-system" clarinet, probably from the early 20th century, and possibly played in military bands. It's in quite good condition for an instrument of its age, and the keys work. However, it's at a high pitch, so couldn't be used in an ensemble, and no one's played on simple-system clarinets for years. It's an interesting artefact, though!' David Pagett, clarinettist

Quality of instrument (out of 5)

Present playability (out of 5)

Value for money (out of 5)

ANTIQUES SHOP

Jeremy Pound Deputy editor

THE SEARCH

Living on the edge of the leafy Cotswolds, I'm not exactly short of nearby options when



SECOND WIND:
an unloved clarinet is
rescued from antique fair
abandonment (below)

it comes to finding an antique shop or two. My reckoning is that a quick jaunt down the A46 into south Gloucestershire will see my task done and dusted by lunchtime. Easy peasy. The towns of Nailsworth and Painswick are both very lovely, particularly on such a sunny autumnal morning... but, admittedly, prove a bit of a dead loss when it comes to finding an instrument. Onto Stroud next. Hmmm. Equally unproductive. A set of battered dining room chairs or an ancient Hornby train set? Yep. A vaguely working musical instrument? Nope. Suddenly it's not looking so easy. Or peasy. But then, salvation. On the road out of Stroud is the Malt House Emporium, a vast building



I'LL BE BLOWED:
one antique shop trumpet,
quite possibly playable

£30



MAGIC FLUTE:
found in a charity shop
after a long, long search...

that houses over 80 antiques dealers. All manner of paraphernalia is here, including a tuba – at £275, too expensive, alas – a couple of military bugles, a rickety East German accordion, a lap harp and, hurrah, a trumpet! Let's give the latter a whirl.

THE INSTRUMENT

The instrument I buy is a Selmer Melody Maker Foreign B flat trumpet, complete with case – it's £65, but I get the price down to £58. A subsequent hunt on the web tells me only that nobody knows much about Selmer Melody Maker Foreign B flat trumpets. What I do learn is that the 'Foreign' bit means that it was made outside the UK, possibly in Czechoslovakia, and it also may be around 50 to 60 years old. I'm no trumpeter, but I can play a few notes on it – its action is a little stodgy, but the purchase of some valve oil (£4.99) solves that. It does, though, need a clean inside and out. Should I be worried that I can't actually pull it apart to do said cleaning?

TOTAL COST: £62.99

BRISTOL ENSEMBLE'S VERDICT

'Selmer is recognised as a decent make. The valves work fine, but the big drawback is that the slides that you need for tuning are completely stuck – it plays fine, but if you can't tune it, who could you play it with? It's also taken a bash or two. Repairing this sufficiently would cost a lot of money.' Gavin Wells, trumpeter

Quality of instrument

Present playability

Value for money

CHARITY SHOP

Rebecca Franks Reviews editor

THE SEARCH

Bristol is packed with charity shops, so I set out one bright morning with high hopes of finding a gem of an instrument. Fifteen shops later, I am crestfallen. All I have spotted is a

violin with no pegs, no strings, no bridge and no bow. Feeling like JR Hartley on his quest for his elusive fly-fishing book, I decide it's time to pick up the phone. But call after call only reveals that second-hand instruments are like gold dust in charity shops – more often than not, charities sell them online. As another *BBC Music* team member has been tasked with scouring the web, I forlornly bid farewell to a handsome cello and a Boosey & Hawkes trombone, and head to a nearby Clic Sargent shop to buy the only complete instrument my search has yielded: a £3 recorder. But then, on a shelf near the counter, I spot a flute! Another customer had reserved it before having a change of heart. Not fancying another 30 calls, I'm less picky...

PLUCKY DISCOVERY:
a violin turns up at a car boot sale near Bath (above)



THE INSTRUMENT

For £30, I have bought an Artley flute, marked with the company's brand name and logo, a serial number (6129970) and the place where it was made: the US. It seems to be in pretty good condition and even as a complete novice I can get it to play a few notes. Searching for the serial number online, I find a helpful list that dates it to 1980. A bit more digging reveals that the Artley Flute Company made waves in Elkhart, Indiana in the 1930s, manufacturing good-quality student instruments. Over the years the brand was bought by ever-larger companies, ending with Conn-Selmer, itself owned by Steinway Musical Instruments. Although they aren't made anymore, Artleys seem to be reckoned by flautists to be good starter flutes.

TOTAL COST: £30

BRISTOL ENSEMBLE'S VERDICT

'Artley flutes are, generally speaking, at the bottom end of the market. This one, though, has been very well looked after: the plating is fairly intact, the pads seal well and the linkages are secure. One cork is missing, but that could be easily replaced, and you could certainly learn to play on this flute.' Roger Armstrong, flautist

Quality of instrument

Present playability

Value for money

CAR BOOT SALE

Neil McKim

Production editor

THE SEARCH

There's a hill overlooking Bath where, in 1643, the English Civil War's Battle of Lansdowne was fought. These days, an unruly gathering of another kind takes place,

as hordes of bargain-hunters gather for the weekly car boot sale. Aside from the oodles of tangled electrical adaptors, rusty garden tools and waterlogged VHS tapes, I'm hoping there just might be a priceless instrument that someone has found in a loft. I choose a bank holiday weekend, when the sale is at its busiest, and spend a good hour before spotting anything. Finally, on the floor, loose in a box, is a violin... and a bow. I take a closer look – it even has 'Stradivarius 1721' written on the inside! Alas, a closer inspection reveals the words 'copie de'. Never mind. The seller is uncertain about where it has come from – 'somewhere in the Midlands'. But it has four strings, no obvious damage and looks to be of a noble enough vintage.

THE INSTRUMENT

Aside from being described as a Stradivarius copy, the violin has another label saying it's manufactured by J Thibouville-Lamy and Co. A bit of research traces this French company's origins back to 1867, when Louis Emile Jérôme Thibouville, an instrument maker, married into the Lamy family. The company grew, mass-producing violins until 1969. I'm guessing my violin is from its latter days and it's clearly been used by a learner as it has fruit stickers marking positions on the fingerboard. The E string looks worn but the rest are fine. The seller lets me have it for £20, plus a bow for £4, as it's 'late in the day'.

TOTAL COST: £24

BRISTOL ENSEMBLE'S VERDICT

'What we have here is a half-size, factory-made violin. It's not in great condition and the strings are so old that you can't actually tune them properly. You are never going to get a very nice sound out of this. It would just be a functional instrument on which a beginner could learn where to put the fingers, but that's about it.'

Roger Huckle, violinist and leader

Quality of instrument 

Present playability 

Value for money   

ONLINE

Elinor Cooper Editorial assistant

THE SEARCH

As someone who has furnished most of a house via eBay and Gumtree, I feel confident that the internet will yield fantastic results. I first look at eBay, but my local finds are less than impressive. Should I wish to travel 3,000 miles to pick up a French-made hunting horn from Italy, there are plenty of opportunities, but the only Bristol instruments within the price-range are of a doll's house variety. On then, to community-based site Gumtree. My first search doesn't bring up much in the way of classical musical instruments, though there are plenty of guitars, amps and effects pedals.



VIOLA HUNT:

Elinor Cooper (above) prowls the web for her four-stringed beast

Turnover on the site, however, appears to be extremely speedy, and soon there is a choice of several pianos (one free, but collection only), a couple of child-size violins, even a didgeridoo. Then, another advertisement catches my eye: 'Vintage viola in original wooden case.' It's accompanied by promising pictures – with moody antique filter – so I make contact...

THE INSTRUMENT

I'm quite smitten with my new Skylark MV020 viola. Aside from a few minor scuffs on its body, it's in good, playable condition, with all strings and bow hairs intact. However, when I look at reviews of the Skylark brand, the torrent of abuse is quite startling. According to the internet, I've managed to get hold of a terrible viola with a stringy, nasal sound. But then, a glimmer of hope... In a niche strings website forum a viola teacher stands up for older models of the brand (which mine is) as 'extremely decent first instruments'. I resolve to trust my own judgment, despite my lack of viola knowledge, and ignore the haters.

TOTAL COST: £70

BRISTOL ENSEMBLE'S VERDICT

'A Chinese factory-made viola, this is, sadly, nothing special. But it does come with everything you need: strings, shoulder rest and bow. In fact, the bow is the best thing about it and, if I was a beginner, I'd be quite happy with it! I'm not so sure about the viola itself...' Carl Hill, violinist

Quality of instrument  

Present playability  

Value for money (with bow)   

A little PS...

Perhaps the motto with searching for second-hand instruments should be 'If at first you don't succeed...' In all of the places the BBC Music Magazine team conducted our respective searches, objects come and go very quickly. Our brief was to complete a purchase within a short space of time but when, in a couple of instances, we later went back to shops that had previously yielded nothing, we were surprised to see some fine-looking instruments sitting there. You may find that it's worth persevering.

MUSICAL DESTINATIONS

A PLACE OF PIANO PILGRIMAGE

Calgary: Canada

Jeremy Pound flies out to the former Winter Olympics host city where, today, audiences gather to hear and cheer winning performances in the concert hall

For two weeks in February 1988, Calgary organist Irene Besse enjoyed superstar status, as she and her instrument were heard by millions of TV viewers across the globe. But don't go getting too excited, organ fans – Besse was not thundering out Bach and Widor at Calgary Cathedral. Her patch was the Saddledome arena where, on the in-house electronic instrument, she tootled out jingles during ice hockey games at the Winter Olympics. Fans of chilly sports may well remember it, music lovers possibly less so.

That said, Besse has also left her mark on the classical music scene of Calgary, a spacious, affluent city set against the

backdrop of the Rocky Mountains in western Canada. The former owner of a large piano dealership, she personally provided the instrument on which the brilliant young Jan Lisiecki (see below) learnt his trade, and has also been a major supporter of the event that has really put the city on the musical map: the Honens Festival and Piano Competition.

Founded in 1992 on the back of a \$5m endowment from philanthropist Esther Honens and staged every three years since then, Honens aims to seek out 'The Complete Pianist' – namely those who are

'I think we've built something very special here in Calgary'

as impressive playing in a chamber group or accompanying singers as they are on the solo recital or concerto stage. By the time I fly in, the competition's ten players have been whittled down to three who, accompanied by the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, each perform two concertos over two finals at the superb Jack Singer Concert Hall. I struggle to pick a clear winner, but those who have been here for the duration tell me that Luca Buratto has been working wonders during the earlier rounds. No surprise, then, when the 22-year-old Italian is named as the winner of the \$100,000 (£49,500) first prize.

'The philosophy we have behind the competition is unique,' Stephen McHolm, Honens's outgoing artistic director, tells me. 'We're looking for a specific kind of artist.

LOCAL HERO



Jan Lisiecki

Born into a Polish family in Calgary in March 1995, Jan Lisiecki began his career as a concert pianist early – by the age of nine, he had already made

his debut with an orchestra. Since then, that career has moved apace and Lisiecki has gone on to perform with many of the world's leading orchestras and conductors, including the late Claudio Abbado and, at the BBC Proms in 2013, Sir Antonio Pappano. At 15, he signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, and has recorded discs of Mozart and Chopin for the 'Yellow Label'. Loyal to his roots, he still returns regularly to Calgary to perform.



The winning pianist must have an authentic, unique voice, and that may not necessarily mean being the great virtuoso. I think we've built something very special here.'

Honens has indeed become big news, but it's not just about the competition. The wider festival also takes in concerts by the great and good – my visit includes a recital by former Honens finalist Jean-Éfflam Bavouzet – plus masterclasses, children's events and all. Outside competition years, a smaller-scale festival keeps the Honens flame flickering.

Calgary's music scene is in fact dominated by all things piano. As well as Lisiecki, another local hero is the brilliant Yuja Wang, alumna of the city's Mount Royal University, which opened its superb new 780-seat concert hall in October – Wang, of course, did the honours at the keyboard. For those interested in the history of the piano and its various cousins, meanwhile, a



PLAYERS WELCOME:
the Saddledome, home of ice hockey
and organ playing; (left) Elton John's
piano at the National Music Centre; (far
left) the Honens Competition final



CALGARY CHAMPIONS:
Honens winner Luca Buratto
with artistic director Stephen
McHolm; (left) women's
rights activist Henrietta
Edwards in Olympic Plaza

browse round the collection at the National Music Centre is a must. Currently relocating to a new home, the NMC's artefacts range from intricately designed 16th-century harpsichords to iconic modern instruments such as the white piano on which Elton John composed many of his songs.

And away from music? Calgary is no slouch. Every July, the famous Calgary Stampede aims to live up to its billing of 'The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth' with rodeos, races and all manner of agricultural mayhem, and the Winter Olympics' legacy can still be enjoyed too – those with steel nerves may want to, say, whizz from the top of the ski jump on a zip wire or hare down the bobsleigh track at the Olympic Park.

Or, for a more passive experience, you could head to a Calgary Flames ice hockey game. The Saddledome organ is, I understand, still in fine fettle... ■

MONIQUE DE ST. CROIX: PETER PORCINÉ: MATHIAS BOTHOR: LUCA VALENTA

CALGARY 5 MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Honens Festival

Though the next Honens competition isn't until 2018, a four-day festival takes place at the Jack Singer Concert Hall from 8-11 September 2016. Full details have yet to be announced. honens.com

Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra

The Jack Singer Concert Hall is also home to Calgary's professional orchestra. Soloists joining them this season include 2012 Honens winner Pavel Kolesnikov, violinist Augustin Hadelich (pictured) and singer Rufus Wainwright. calgaryphil.com

Kensington Sinfonia

Calgary's leading chamber orchestra plays at the city's Hope Lutheran Church. Its



next concert, on 21 February, features works by Piazzolla, Vivaldi and Mendelssohn. kensingtonsinfonia.ca

Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall

Situated at the University of Calgary's Rozsa Centre, the 384-seat Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall stages regular chamber music events. Artists appearing in early 2016 include violinist Stephanie Chase, jazz trumpeter Brad Turner and the

New Odyssey 3 trio. scpa.ucalgary.ca

Bella Concert Hall

Calgary's Mount Royal University has yet to announce details of the concert programme planned for its newly opened 787-seat hall. Watch this space, as they say...

mtroyal.ca/bella

COMPOSER OF THE MONTH

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Russia's great fantasist

In conjuring up the otherworldly magic of operas like *Christmas Eve* and *The Snowmaiden*, Rimsky-Korsakov was indebted to someone very close to home, as *Daniel Jaffé* explains

Behind every great man, it has often been said, is a great woman. This was certainly true of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. In 1871 the then 27-year-old naval officer and amateur composer – on the strength of one colourful orchestral work, *Sadko* – was offered the post of professor of composition and instrumentation at the St Petersburg Conservatory. With the naive chutzpah of youth, Rimsky accepted, though, as he confessed in his autobiography, 'I couldn't at that time have harmonised a chorale properly, had never written a single contrapuntal exercise in my life, and had only the haziest understanding of strict fugue... My grasp of the musical forms (particularly of the rondo) was equally hazy. Although I scored my own compositions colourfully enough, I had no real knowledge of the technique of the strings, or of the practical possibilities of horns, trumpets and trombones. As for conducting, I had never conducted an orchestra in my life...'

The writer Nikolai Gogol, whose work was to so inspire Rimsky-Korsakov's music, had faced a similar situation when appointed professor of history at St Petersburg University in 1834. Knowing nothing of his subject, Gogol was soon ridiculed by his students and before long had to be given the sack. Yet Rimsky not only survived in his Conservatory post but ultimately became one of Russia's most celebrated teachers of composition, whose pupils included two 20th-century giants, Stravinsky and Prokofiev. The difference was partly, as often said, Rimsky's own diligence and determination to keep one step ahead of his students, so becoming – as he said – 'one of the Conservatory's best pupils'; but most crucially, he also had the support of a remarkable woman: Nadezhda Purgold.

Unlike Rimsky, her soon-to-be fiancé, Purgold had received a thorough training in music, having studied piano under Anton

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV'S STYLE

Orchestral colours

Rimsky-Korsakov admired Glinka's uncluttered yet effective orchestration, which had a beneficial influence on his own. Rather than blending instrumental colours to make a rich sound, Rimsky typically highlights the typical character of each instrument and its family, often making striking contrasts between woodwind and brass, for instance.

Instrumentation

Himself a great and inventive orchestrator, much of Rimsky's individual sound derived from his willingness to gain first-hand knowledge of an instrument's capability in terms of virtuosity and colour. Some of his 'special effects' were admired and widely imitated, such as the natural-harmonic string glissandos used in *Christmas Eve*, 'borrowed' by Ravel (*Rapsodie espagnole*) and Stravinsky (*The Firebird*).

Fantastical subjects

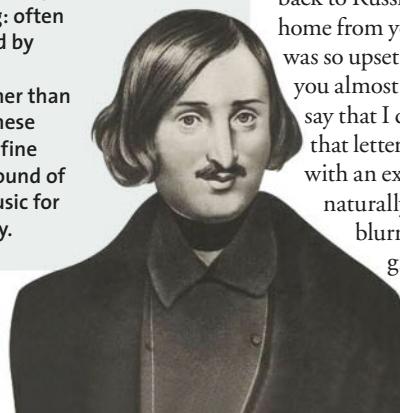
Gogol's (below) often surreal tales inspired Rimsky-Korsakov to combine colourful and fantastical characters, depicted with some of his most inventive colours and harmonies (such as the witches and demons in *Christmas Eve*), with more realistically portrayed 'everyday' characters.

Folk-like melody

Rimsky followed Balakirev's example in arranging solo melodies 'derived' (often by some distance) from Russian folk singing: often lightly accompanied by a mildly expressive countermelody rather than heavily arranged, these melodies helped define the characteristic sound of Russian classical music for more than a century.

Herke (who also taught the highly gifted composer-pianist Musorgsky) and at the St Petersburg Conservatory under its theorist and director Nikolai Zaremba. She was a highly accomplished pianist, making numerous transcriptions of orchestral works including Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, and also a composer in her own right, creating orchestral works as well as music for her own instrument. Purgold and Rimsky-Korsakov first met in the spring of 1868, when they were guests at Dargomyzhsky's home for his play-through at the piano of his new opera *The Stone Guest*. It was a while before love blossomed, though they saw a good deal of each other afterwards since they moved in similar music circles.

Rimsky, steady and rather serious, was never one to dazzle salons or the ladies who attended them. One of his pupils at the Conservatory, Nikolai Sokolov, later wrote: 'I am not ashamed to confess that Rimsky-Korsakov's outward appearance – his ill-cut, shabby clothes and old boots – complied with the unconscious demands of my democratic leanings.' Yet by 1871, following the dizzying events of his appointment as Conservatory professor and, later that year, the death in Pisa of his only brother, Voin – 22 years older than the composer and by then a rear-admiral – Rimsky was in no doubt about his feelings for Nadezhda Purgold. Travelling to Italy, at the behest of the Ministry of Marine (he was still an employee) to bring Voin's embalmed body back to Russia, Rimsky wrote to her: 'Coming home from your house that last evening, I was so upset that I forgot myself and wrote to you almost in a state of fever... I will only say that I don't withdraw a single word of that letter. The next day I left Petersburg with an extremely painful feeling; though naturally fatigue and travel impressions blurred it. I thought about you a great deal on the way... and



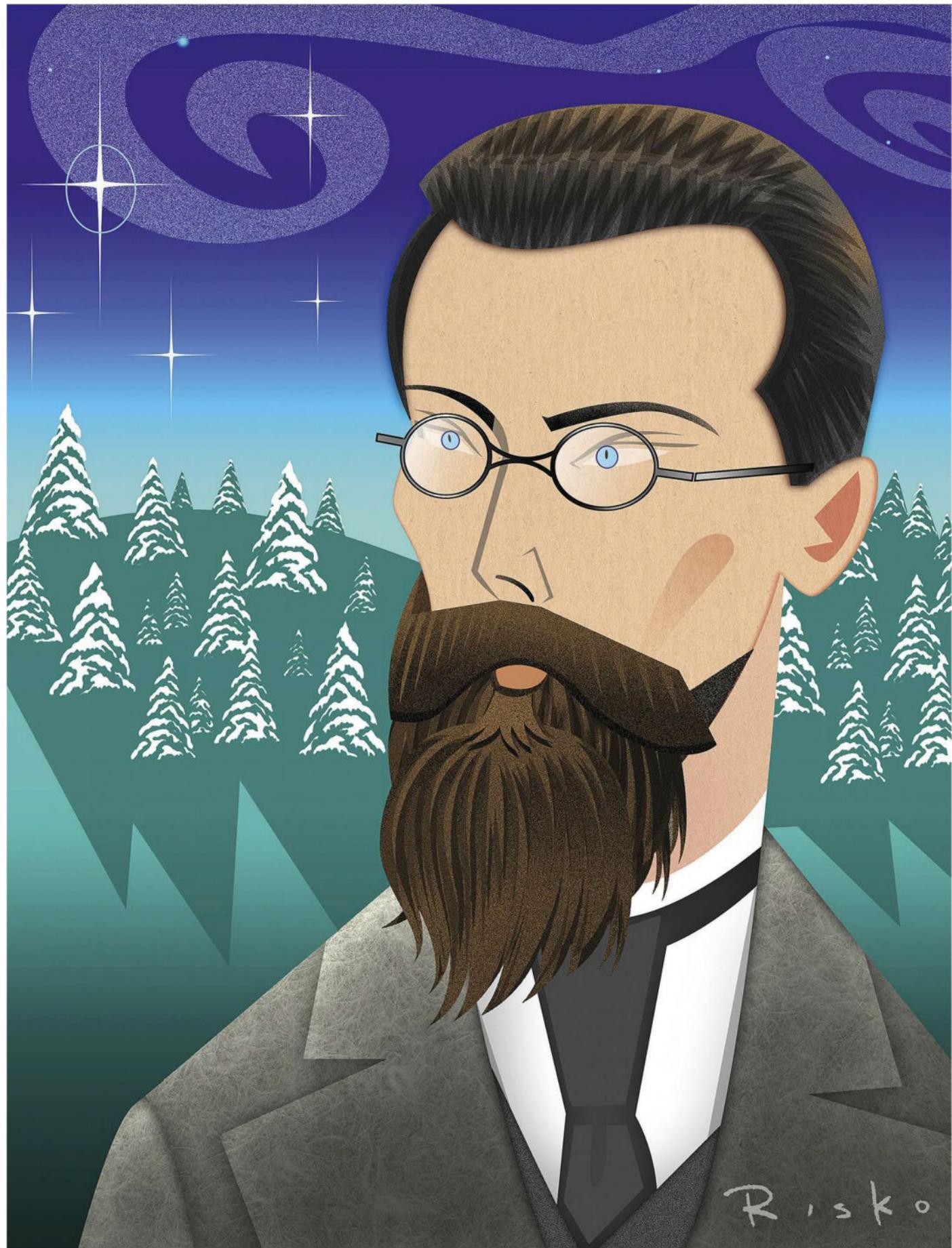


ILLUSTRATION: RISKO

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Overture

Tchaikovsky:
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Debussy:
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d'un faune

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when I happened to see something nice, I always wanted you to look at it with me.' The following month they were betrothed.

Certainly from that point, if not earlier, Nadezhda became Rimsky's most important influence after the composer Balakirev – particularly after Balakirev himself, suffering a nervous breakdown in 1872, temporarily withdrew from Russian musical life.

Nadezhda brought her fiancé up to speed on the arcane theories of music and composition – more so than Rimsky's lessons in harmony via correspondence from Tchaikovsky – so preventing his career at the Conservatory from being shipwrecked. Indeed, Nadezhda herself continued composing until family commitments forced her to put her musical activities to one side: even just a week or two before her marriage she completed *The Enchanted Spot*, a 'musical picture' based on one of Gogol's Ukrainian folk tales from the collection *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*, which she orchestrated the following year. Her other crucial achievement was to stir Rimsky's (and indeed Musorgsky's) interest in that very

Musorgsky considered Rimsky a traitor to the cause of musical realism

collection of Gogol's tales and, through this, in the pre-Christian heritage of myth and ritual. Such was the inspiration behind such operatic masterpieces as Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden*, *Sadko* (not to be confused with his earlier orchestral work), *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* and *The Golden Cockerel*.

The genesis of all this was *May Night*, which Nadezhda and Nikolai read together on the day of their betrothal. It is a typically Gogolian mixture of earthy village life mixed with supernatural beings such as *rusalki* (water maidens). Nadezhda immediately encouraged Rimsky to use this as a basis for an opera, which he eventually began just over six years later in February 1878. In the meantime Rimsky-Korsakov's intensive study of harmony and counterpoint had led temporarily to a fallow period in his work. His drily academic Third Symphony, in which he exercised all the contrapuntal tricks he had learned without any enlivening inspiration, dismayed Musorgsky who now considered Rimsky a traitor to the cause of musical realism. Even Borodin, by then composer of a masterly Second Symphony, candidly characterised Rimsky's latest effort as the work of a professor determined to write 'A great Symphony in C'. Yet he, alone of Balakirev's circle, remained a loyal friend. When

THE LIFE

1844 THE TIMES

1844



Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov is born in **TIKHVIN**, 120 miles east of St Petersburg, to a landless aristocratic family.

1853

The Crimean War begins. The war is the first to be documented extensively in written reports and photographs. Defeated in 1856, Russia is forced to disband its naval presence in the Black Sea.

1850

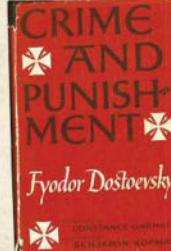
Aged five, he begins piano lessons, though he later admits he was 'indifferent' to music, preferring to read novels.

1861

A portrait of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

His piano teacher **FEDOR KANILLE** introduces him to Balakirev. He becomes part of a circle of musicians around Balakirev called 'The Five' that includes Cui, Musorgsky and Borodin.

1866



Dostoevsky's **CRIME AND PUNISHMENT** is published in installments in *The Russian Messenger*. It is a criticism of the Nihilist movement, which promotes violence and rejects authority.

1871

He becomes a professor at **ST PETERSBURG CONSERVATORY** despite a lack of formal music training. His embracing of the German music tradition is seen by fellow Russian nationalists as a betrayal.

1882

A portrait of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

He is acquainted with wealthy music patron Mitrofan Belyayev, who becomes his benefactor. Belyayev supports many



1873

The League of Three Emperors, an alliance of Austria-Hungary, the German Empire and Russia, is formed. Orchestrated by German Chancellor **OTTO VON BISMARCK**, it is intended to bring peace to Northern Europe.

1881

Tsar Alexander II is assassinated by the revolutionary group Narodnaya Volya. Several of his planned liberal reforms, including the formation of a parliament, are abandoned in the wake of his death.

1891



Construction of the **TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY** begins. The route will eventually run from Moscow to Vladivostok, with connections into China and Mongolia.

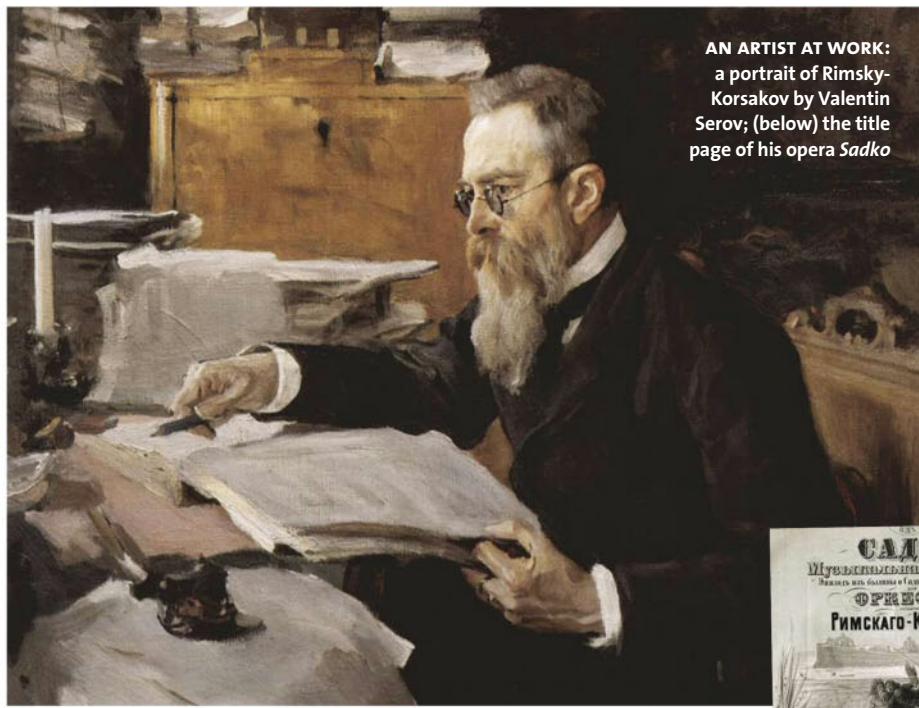
1908



He dies at his Lubensk estate after a long illness and **BURIED IN ST PETERSBURG** next to composers Borodin, Glinka and Musorgsky.

1905

Political and social unrest spreads through Russia, and Tsar Nicholas II is forced to convene a parliament.



AN ARTIST AT WORK:
a portrait of Rimsky-Korsakov by Valentin Serov; (below) the title page of his opera *Sadko*

Rimsky was appointed inspector of naval bands in 1873, he would bring home new and unfamiliar instruments; Borodin would then join him in playing and experimenting to discover their capabilities in sound and technique – all of which furthered Rimsky's remarkable skills as an orchestrator.

But what rescued Rimsky and eventually led him back to the path urged by his wife was his 'discovery' of Russian folk song. Having first considered making a collection of folk songs in 1875, he was nudged into action the following year by Balakirev introducing him to his new friend, the government minister Tertiy Filippov. An amateur enthusiast of Russian folk songs, Filippov sang several of them to Rimsky. By today's standards of scholarship, these 'folk songs' were bowdlerised travesties, furthermore presented as melodies rather than as multi-voice part songs as actually sung by Russian peasants. Though Rimsky recognised that several of Filippov's songs were 'corrupted' by their 'army and factory' provenance, they nonetheless stimulated his interest, not least in the meaning and pre-Christian origin of their texts. Equally, his work on an edition of Glinka's operas encouraged Rimsky to make his music more spare and direct.

All this – folk song and Rimsky-Korsakov's growing knowledge of orchestral colour – nourished and inspired what is now regarded the first of his great operas. Completed in 1878, *May Night*, as Rimsky-Korsakov himself recognised, was the work in which he 'cast off... the shackles of counterpoint'. It also sparked his creativity: '*May Night*... led to a series of fantastic operas in which the worship

of the sun and of sun-gods was introduced. I did this either directly, through subject-matter drawn from the ancient Russian pagan world (as in *The Snowmaiden* and *Mlada*), or indirectly, by reflection, in operas the subject matter of which had been taken either from later Christian times (as in *May Night* or in *Christmas Eve*). I say indirectly and by reflection; for though sun-worship had entirely faded before the light of Christianity, yet the whole cycle of ceremonial songs and games to this very day rests on the ancient pagan sun-worship which lives unconsciously in the people.'

May Night was also the first of his two Gogol-inspired works, the other being the far less celebrated yet splendidly colourful and influential *Christmas Eve*. Before *Christmas Eve* came *The Snowmaiden*, based on a play by Alexander Ostrovsky for which Tchaikovsky had written the incidental music for its original production. Rimsky, when he first read the play in 1874, had been unimpressed by the story concerning the eponymous heroine who is safe from the sun so long as she does not fall in love. But in 1880, having since become fascinated by the pre-Christian beliefs and rituals of Russia, he now saw beyond the tale's fantastical elements to its pantheistic heart. One may detect several pagan elements in Rimsky-Korsakov's operatic treatment of this winter's tale, not least the sun god Yarilo who is openly worshipped in the final act.

Yet when Rimsky came to highlight similar pagan elements he detected in Gogol's

tale *Christmas Eve*, this proved more than Russian audiences familiar with Gogol's original tale were prepared to stomach. The charming orchestral suite Rimsky drew from the opera is today far more familiar, with its tinkling orchestration and melodies by turns beguiling and ferocious. Yet *Christmas Eve* – which tells of how a smith, Vakula, enlists the help of the devil to get hold of the tsaritsa's slippers and win the hand of the beautiful Oksana – was an important precursor of such 20th-century classics as Prokofiev's opera *The Love for Three Oranges*; even the suite inspired such composers as Vaughan Williams, who discovered the music through his teacher Ravel – witness his overture to *The Wasps*. For opening this fantastical seam in Rimsky-Korsakov's work, we owe much to Nadezhda Purgold. ■



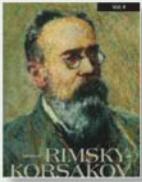
BBC
RADIO



Composer of the Week is broadcast on Radio 3 at 12pm, Mon to Fri, repeated at 6.30pm. Upcoming programmes are: 7-11 December *Sibelius* 14-18 December *Iceland* 21-25 December *Berwald* 28 Dec – 1 Jan *Jean Coulthard*

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

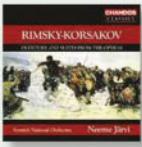
RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS



Christmas Eve

Tarkhov, Krasovsky; Radio Moscow Choir & Symphony Orchestra/Nikolai Golovanov *Documents* 298348

This 1948 recording is full of character and worth hearing despite historic sound.



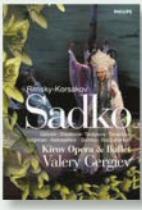
Overture and Suites from the Operas

RSNO/Neeme Järvi *Chandos* CHAN 10369(2)
An excellent introduction to Rimsky-Korsakov's fantastical side.



The Snowmaiden

Sokolik, Arkhipova; Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra/Fedoseyev *Relief* CR 991049
A fine cast captures the charm and poignancy of Rimsky's pantheistic opera.



Sadko

Galusin, Tarassova, Gassiev; Kirov Chorus & Orchestra/Valery Gergiev *Philips* 0704399 (DVD)
A superb cast in a wonderful production of one of Rimsky's fairy-tale operas.

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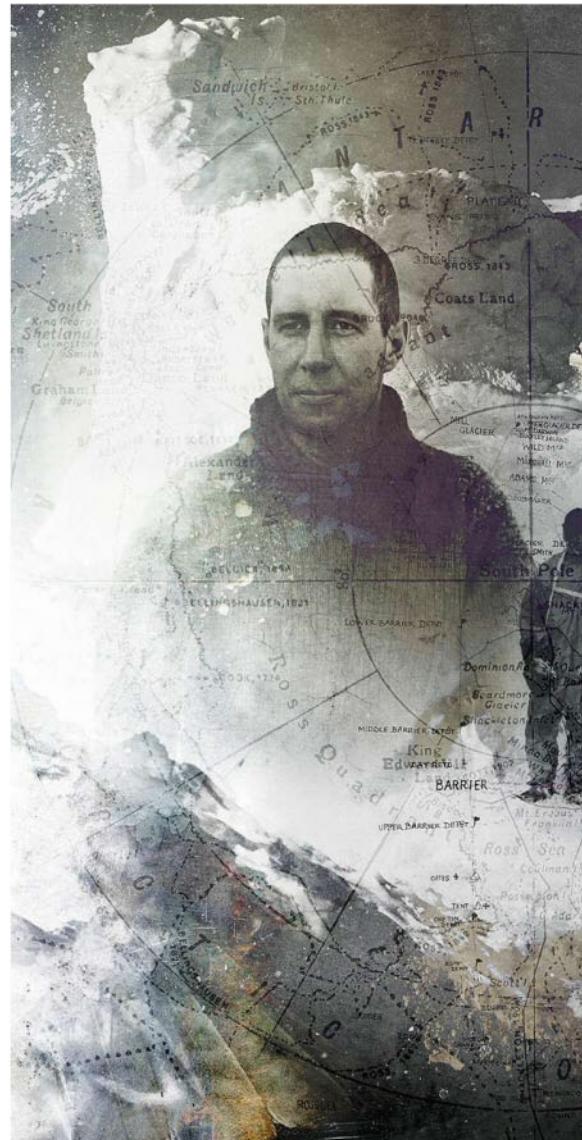
BUILDING A LIBRARY

SINFONIA ANTARTICA

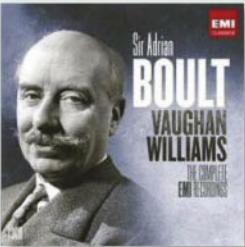
Ralph Vaughan Williams

With its depictions of polar winds and frozen landscapes, Vaughan Williams's Scott-inspired Symphony No. 7 is rarely less than dramatic. **Malcolm Hayes** seeks the best recordings

By the time that Vaughan Williams composed his score for the 1948 film *Scott of the Antarctic*, this story of heroic endeavour had long passed into English mythology – having failed to be the first team of explorers to reach the South Pole, Captain Robert Falcon Scott and his colleagues froze to death on their return journey, just 11 miles short of safety. After completing the music for the film, Vaughan Williams sensed further mileage both in its underlying theme of mankind battling the elements, and in the range of musical ideas he'd already come up with. The result was the five-movement *Sinfonia Antartica* – the seventh of his nine symphonies, in which he reverted, with old-age mastery, to the free-form, suite-like method he had used in *A Sea Symphony* four decades earlier. A soprano soloist, women's chorus, organ and wind machine are all part of the orchestral armoury.



BBC MUSIC CHOICE

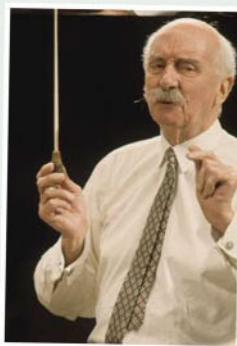


Sir Adrian Boult (conductor)
Norma Burrowes (sop); London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra (1970) EMI 903 5672 (part of 13-CD set)

THE BEST RECORDING SIR ADRIAN BOULT

SINFONIA ANTARTICA'S WIDE range of ideas and musical devices makes it a tricky work to bring off with complete success. The opening *Prelude* and the tragic *Epilogue* call for interpretation in the grand manner, while also drawing convincingly together a sequence of loosely connected musical ideas. Then there are the three central movements – a *Scherzo* depicting whales and penguins, a central *Landscape*, and an *Intermezzo* (where Scott writes a letter to his wife) – requiring wry humour, a Sibelius-like command of big-scale nature-depiction, and gentle romantic wistfulness.

Made in 1970, the second of Adrian Boult's (right) two *Sinfonia Antartica* studio recordings has his trademark

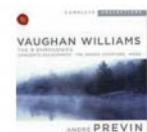


directness of purpose and tight-reined pacing. It's also the only one, in modern or modern-ish recorded sound, that excels in all five of the work's very different movements. The *Prelude*'s tempo marking of *Andante maestoso* calls for heroic grandeur without portentousness – a difficult ask, and Boult does it better than anyone. The icebound wastes of *Landscape* are portrayed with extra bleakness; and while other versions convey the *Epilogue*'s final tragedy, Boult's focused interpretation is the one that leaves you truly disturbed. Leading the landscape-evoking, wordless female chorus, Norma Burrowes's delivery of the soprano part – beautiful and emotionally detached – is the best on record.

BBC
RADIO

Building a Library is broadcast on BBC Radio 3 at 9.30am each Saturday as part of CD Review. A highlights podcast is available at www.bbc.co.uk/radio3

tellingly brings out the Debussy-and-Ravel connection in Vaughan Williams's scoring – as in the poignant *Intermezzo*, where Davis's beautiful touch is the mark of an experienced opera-conductor responding to the moment. Fine orchestral playing is enhanced by the acoustic of St Augustine's Church in London, spacious and beautifully clear; and since the organ solo in *Landscape* is recorded there too, its grandeur avoids the surreal element of Handley's recording. But in the *Prelude* and *Epilogue*, Davis's instinct to avoid bombast undercuts the music's heroic tone too much.



André Previn (conductor)

Heather Harper (sop),
Ralph Richardson (speaker);
Ambrosian Singers, London
Symphony Orchestra (1969)

RCA 8287 6557082 (download only)

Previn's 1969 recording includes the written superscriptions – by Shelley, the biblical psalmist, Coleridge, Donne and Scott himself – with which Vaughan Williams prefaced *Sinfonia Antartica*'s movements, but a fair enough idea in principle is subverted by Sir Ralph Richardson's melodramatic delivery. Previn's conducting engages well with the music's epic manner: while his tempo choice for the *Prelude*'s *Andante maestoso* is *Adagio*-broad, the reprise of the movement's main theme towards the end of the *Epilogue* is powerful. There are countless fine moments, among them the ethereal flute solo in *Landscape*. There are also blind spots, as in the *Prelude*'s premonition of the death of Captain Oates – a sequence of heavy chords that lack menace. And soprano Heather Harper's *portamento* scoops don't convince.

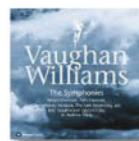
THREE MORE GREAT RECORDINGS



Vernon Handley (conductor)
Alison Hargan (sop);
Royal Philharmonic Choir,
RLPO (1990) EMI 575 7602
(part of 7-CD set)

Vernon Handley's 1990 recording features fine digital sound, revealing a phenomenal range of detail in the virtuoso scoring, plus massive power in the big moments. It also excels in its grand-manner portrayal of the human struggle: Handley's choice of tempo in the *Prelude* is closer to *Adagio* than *Andante*, but the effect is memorable (as are the *Scherzo*'s roistering penguins). This disc's party-piece is the climax in *Landscape*, where a *fortissimo* organ solo depicts a towering ice-

wall blocking the explorers' path. Recorded separately in Liverpool Cathedral and overdubbed, the result is awesomely loud and impressive. Drawbacks include Handley's not-so-subtle *Intermezzo*, and Alison Hargan's gorgeous, but too-sexy soprano solo.



Andrew Davis (conductor)
Patricia Rozario (sop);
BBC Symphony Chorus
and Orchestra (1996)
Warner Classics 2564 698483
(part of 6-CD set)

Davis's approach to *Sinfonia Antartica*'s musical panorama is the very opposite of Handley's. No other interpretation so

AND ONE TO AVOID...



Made in 1989, Bryden Thomson and the LSO's recording for Chandos is one of those bemusing types where, for all the potential, the right kind of focus is relentlessly

lacking. Every part of the operation sounds generalised – Thomson's under-characterised interpretation, the over-plush orchestral sound and recorded acoustic. The massive organ solo in *Landscape* here sounds ridiculously tame and distant. And the same movement's flute solo has an inadvertent but blatant mistake: how was it not spotted?

If you enjoy RVW's *Sinfonia Antartica* and would like to try out similar works, see overleaf...

SO, WHERE NEXT...?

We suggest works to explore after Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica*

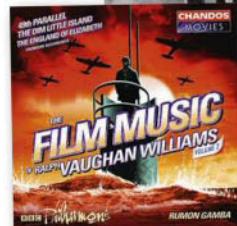
Vaughan Williams

Suite from 49th Parallel

Just seven years before he worked on *Scott of the Antarctic*, Vaughan Williams had written his first film score, for *49th Parallel*. The movie follows a stranded Nazi U-boat crew trying to cross Canada to reach the US, and was designed 'to scare the pants off the Americans and to bring them into the war sooner'. Muir Matheson, director of music for the Ministry of Information, which was behind the production, recruited Vaughan Williams, opening up the world of film to him. The suite created from the score is worth investigating, with string writing and pastoral elements that are pure Vaughan Williams; the Prelude was later restyled as the choral work *The New Commonwealth*, with words by Harold Child.

Recommended recording:

BBC Philharmonic/Rumon Gamba
Chandos CHAN 10244



Peter Maxwell Davies

Symphony No. 8

Maxwell Davies went one step – and a ship's voyage – further than Vaughan Williams when he wrote his own Antarctic Symphony. Commissioned by the British Antarctic Survey and the Philharmonia to mark the 50th anniversary of *Scott of the Antarctic*, the British composer hopped on a boat to experience the continent for himself. 'The ice crashing along the bows was one of the most exhilarating sounds I'd ever heard,' he said. Although it's an abstract work, it's tempting to think that the unusual Antarctic noises are reflected in the piece's varied percussion, including tuned brandy glasses, pebbles, a biscuit tin filled with broken glass and three lengths of builder's scaffolding.

Recommended recording:

NZSO/Paul MacAlindin Soundcloud

Lundquist Arctic

For the polar opposite of Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica*, take a journey to *Arctic*, a short symphonic poem by the Swedish composer Torbjörn Lundquist (1920–2000) – for all that the two works are miles apart geographically, their soundworlds are not dissimilar. The composer of a fair number of film scores, Lundquist's brilliance at conjuring up vivid imagery is clear. Beginning with an almost Sibelian soundscape of a clarinet solo set against shimmering strings, the scene in front of



PARALLEL UNIVERSE:
Laurence Olivier,
playing Johnnie, in
the 1941 film *49th Parallel*

us is, at first, bare and icy. Soon, great orchestral crashes, dark and ominous low brass, and fleeting moments of poignant melody remind us of the wild landscape.

Recommended recording: Umeå Symphony Orchestra/B Tommy Andersson
Bluebell ABCD072 (download only)

Rautavaara Cantus Arcticus

We also head towards the North Pole for Rautavaara's three-movement paean to Arctic birds, scored for tape recording and orchestra. In Rautavaara's first movement, 'The Bog', the Finn depicts the isolation of the frozen north, firstly with two solo flutes, alternately chanting out a haunting call, before the sound of arctic birdsong emerges alongside brass and woodwind. Beautiful, cinematic string writing, reminiscent of Vaughan Williams, then adds a sense of grandeur. The second movement, 'Melancholy', is a stunning reflection, perhaps on the fate of arctic wildlife, while the final movement, 'Swans Migrating', is almost pure *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*.

Recommended recording: Lahti Symphony Orchestra/Osmo Vänska BIS BISCD1038

B Tchaikovsky The Winds of Siberia

Soviet composer Boris Tchaikovsky – no relation – brings an epic film music idiom into his tone poem. Although he shies away from direct programmatic music, a variety of orchestral textures are used to evoke a Siberia

both majestic and coldly dangerous. Six rumbling timpani chords underpin lush string writing, and an unusually large wind section plays everything from fanfares to duets and trios. Throughout, Tchaikovsky lurches between symphonic writing and chamber intimacy to depict magnificently a Siberian duality: cold danger and wild beauty.

Recommended recording: Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra/Vladimir Fedoseyev
Chandos CHAN10299

George Fenton Frozen Planet

One of the most recent musical portrayals of the unforgiving landscape at the world's polar regions is the soundtrack to BBC TV's 2011 series *Frozen Planet*. Although it touches on Captain Scott, it mainly focuses on the challenges facing the region's wildlife. Employing overt film music styles, George Fenton portrays the bleak landscapes in a variety of ways, including shimmering flurries of strings on 'Winter' and, for 'Antarctic Mystery', a combination of harp, celesta, rich strings and mournful woodwind. Fenton brings individual animals to life, too, from scurrying percussion for the polar weasel, to a gliding string theme for the beluga whales.

Recommended recording: BBC Concert Orchestra/George Fenton Silva Screen Records SILCD1392

Next month:

Brahms's Horn Trio

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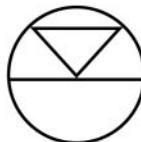
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Henry Audio's USB DAC I28 Mk II brings audiophile sound quality to your computer

Downloaded music has the potential to reproduce the exhilaration of a live concert in the comfort of your own home but a computer needs a little help to get you there. A digital-to-analogue converter, or DAC, is all you need to get a vivid, colourful and faithful reproduction of the sound. Norwegian company Henry Audio brings you the internationally acclaimed USB DAC I28 Mk II, a handy little box of tricks that connects your amplifier and computer with no external power supply. To your ears, this may very well be the hi-fi upgrade of the year.

KEY FEATURES

- **High quality parts** Henry Audio uses a range of top components, including a state-of-the-art AK4430 DAC and high-grade Golledge oscillators.
- **Flexible USB hi-fi** The DAC I28 Mk II is compatible with PC and Mac computers and supports high-quality music files, up to 24-bit/192kHz.
- **An open source design** The USB DAC I28 Mk II is the result of a collaboration by online enthusiasts.

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KEY FEATURES

- **Wireless music streaming** Connect a pair of speakers and plug the Stream AMP into your network and access all the music you could want.
- **Access to online music** As well as online music streaming services, like Tidal and Spotify, a huge quantity of internet radio stations is available.
- **Wide range of formats** The Stream AMP can play high-resolution music in just about any file format, including 24-bit/96kHz WAV and FLAC files, plus Apple's lossless ALAC and MP3.



BRINGING YOU CLOSER TO THE MUSIC

The American headphone specialist Audeze has combined truly revolutionary acoustic engineering with beautiful craftsmanship to provide the finest listening experience available

The best-in-class accuracy of Audeze headphones makes them essential for anyone requiring the most transparent audio reproduction. The US specialist's headphones boast cutting-edge planar magnetic technology which gives greater frequency response – extending the high-end and lowering distortion levels – plus a better overall sound quality than traditional headphones. The range now includes the new EL-8 headphones and the Deckard amplifier/digital to analogue converter (DAC), a perfect way to enhance the performance of any brand of headphone.

Audeze's Deckard amp will enhance the performance of your headphones



KEY FEATURES

- **Flexible use** These comfortable over-ear designs are available in both closed-back (ideal for music on the move) and open-back (perfect for traditional home hi-fi) models.
- **Pioneering technology** The new Audeze EL-8 headphones use the world's most advanced planar magnetic technology, with a sound quality that's unheard of in this price category.
- **Impressive amp/DAC** If you want to hear more from any headphones, you can drive them with Audeze's Deckard, a powerhouse headphone amp combined with a high-performance DAC.
- **Superb sound** The Audeze's Deckard's sound is exciting and dynamic with beautifully rendered tonal colours that make music come alive.

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The entry-level Astell&Kern AK Jr; (right) the dual-DAC AK120II in its desktop cradle



ASTELL&KERN MAKES A DIFFERENCE

If you enjoy listening to music on the move but are finding your smartphone's sound unsatisfactory, Astell&Kern's high-resolution portable players are the ideal solution

To get the very best from your listening experience, you will need a better player than a smartphone. Astell&Kern's award-winning range of portables will transform your musical enjoyment, wherever you like to listen. From studio master-quality 24bit downloads to nearly every music format there is, Astell&Kern's exquisitely designed players will impress. All beautifully styled with aluminium /duralumin, they also work as excellent USB DACs (digital to analogue converters), plus there's a range of stylish accessories, including bespoke cases and docking cradles.

The flagship AK380 model boasts unbeatable sound quality and a luxury finish



KEY FEATURES

- Easy to carry** Weighing 93g and measuring 6.9mm at its thinnest point, the AK Junior is the ideal go-anywhere high-resolution player. It has a 24bit/192kHz Wolfson DAC with 64GB of expandable storage
- Format friendly** The AK120 II is a dual-channel DAC design with a Cirrus Logic DAC dedicated to each channel. Offering Wi-Fi streaming, it supports most formats and has 128GB of expandable storage.
- Superior performance** The AK380 sets new standards in high-definition portable music. Its dual 32-bit DACs and potential for 384GB-plus of storage make this an ultimate player.
- Critical appeal** Astell&Kern has won widespread praise. *The Telegraph* says: 'This company single-handedly taught the world that there is life beyond the iPod and iPhone for music on the go.'
- Distinctive styling** Astell&Kern players are crafted from metal, including aluminium and duralumin, with premium accent materials including carbon fibre.

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AKG's stylish wireless headphones

AKG Y50BT BLUETOOTH HEADPHONES

AKG is adding to its impressive track record of award-winning sound and stylish design by launching the Y50BT headphones

AKG's Y50BT on-ear headphones score highly for style while allowing you to listen without wires. These 'BT' Bluetooth-enabled headphones offer a seamless connection and an internal battery capable of more than 20 hours of music playback.

The Y50BT headphones also feature AKG's legendary 40mm speakers that produce a balanced and powerful sound. This audio excellence is matched by an elegant design – available in three bold colours, with a surface specially coated with a hybrid matt/gloss finish, the AKG Y50BTs are available in a choice of blue, black and silver.



AKG's wireless headphones mean an end to annoying tangles.

KEY FEATURES

- **Legendary AKG sound** A clear, world-class and award-winning acoustic sound that will help take your musical enjoyment and appreciation to new levels.

- **Bluetooth enabled for music** Pursue your passions wirelessly and easily, with ear-cup mounted controls.

- **Long-lasting** The AKG Y50BTs charge via micro USB and there's the option of using them with a supplied 3.5mm bypass cable if you exceed the 20 hours of battery life.

- **Take phone calls** You can answer phone calls easily by using the mounted controls.

- **Easy listening** The AKG Y50BTs are built for comfort, and the ear-cups swivel flat and fold inwards to fit easily in a coat pocket.

AKG
by HARMAN

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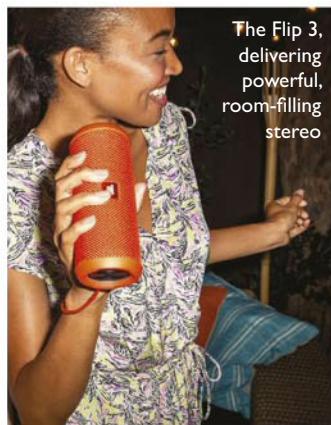
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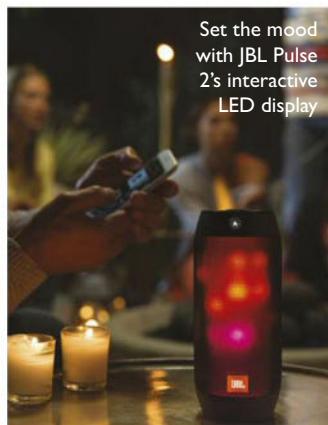
SPLASHPROOF BLUETOOTH SPEAKERS

JBL introduces the ultimate range of water-resistant portable Bluetooth speakers, combining a wide-range of features with stunning audio performance

If you like listening to music whatever the weather, JBL's range of three portable Bluetooth speakers is the answer. The JBL Flip 3 is an ultra-compact portable speaker that delivers powerful, room-filling stereo sound while also coping well with outdoor life. The JBL's Pulse 2 combines these qualities with sensational sound and an interactive LED light show, adding a colourful display to your listening. And the JBL Xtreme is a top-of-the-range portable Bluetooth speaker that produces earthshaking, stereo sound. It has a rechargeable battery and dual USB charge, keeping your music going as long as you need.



The Flip 3, delivering powerful, room-filling stereo



Set the mood with JBL Pulse 2's interactive LED display

KEY FEATURES

- **Long lasting** Powered by rechargeable batteries, the JBL Flip 3 and Pulse 2 offer ten hours of continuous play, while the JBL Xtreme can go for 15 hours.
- **Light display** Transform your party with a light show, thanks to the multi-coloured LEDs on the JBL Pulse 2.
- **Good indoors or out** JBL's Bluetooth speaker range can be used wherever you are – from tabletop to poolside, from sunny mornings to rainy nights.
- **Weatherproof** The stylishly designed speaker range is extremely durable and incorporates splashproof fabric material.
- **Noise-cancelling speakerphone** The JBL Xtreme offers a noise-cancelling option and an echo-cancelling speakerphone for conference calls.



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SMALL TECHNOLOGY, BEAUTIFUL SOUND

The Olive ONE from Midland Hi-Fi is a multi-room high-definition music player that combines miniature technology with terrific sound

Many people are adopting a minimalist approach to their homes, searching for high-fidelity products with a small footprint. Midland Hi-Fi's Olive ONE is a multi-room HD music player that fits the bill. It's a true masterpiece of miniaturisation, offering an amazing array of facilities.

The gorgeous unit, with its large touchscreen, has a hard-drive capable of storing the equivalent of around 3,000 CDs in bit-perfect quality. Bluetooth connectivity enables you to play music from a phone or tablet, as well as access thousands of internet radio stations.

KEY FEATURES

- **Amazing sound** Featuring a 32-bit/384kHz DAC by Burr-Brown and dual high-definition amplifiers, the Olive ONE delivers music in superb quality.
- **Convenient access to all your music** Stream music from your smartphone, via Bluetooth, or to play music from your Mac or PC, or via a home network connection such as Wi-Fi.
- **Multi-room music** Add an Olive ONE to each room and you can play music all over your home.

The stunning
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The NOVAFIDELITY XI2 is an exceptional box of tricks. It stores all your music in one place and will link to your existing system or work as a stand-alone device. The wide range of music formats it supports include high-definition 24-bit/192kHz WAV and FLAC files and Apple's own lossless audio codec (ALAC).

The XI2 enables you can bring all your old music collections back to life by transferring your CDs, vinyls and cassettes. It has a 4.3-inch colour screen and includes a internet radio, with Spotify Connect for music streaming. The XI2 is perfect for smaller spaces and is easy to use.

KEY FEATURES

- **High-definition playback** The XI2 supports 24-bit/192kHz high-definition audio and a wide variety of file formats.
- **CD ripping** Transfer your entire CD collection to the NOVAFIDELITY XI2, including all the cover artwork.
- **Streaming** The NOVAFIDELITY XI2 has an in-built high-quality music streaming internet radio with access to thousands of stations.

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The Ruark R4 Mk3, which comes in a range of colours and finishes

RUARK AUDIO R4 GETS A MAKEOVER

Ruark Audio has revamped its class-leading R4 music system from the ground up, adding Bluetooth, making the R4 Mk3 the perfect music solution for 21st-century living

The new R4 Mk3 looks reassuringly familiar but has been re-engineered throughout, making it better than ever. With its combination of stunning sound and design, the R4 Mk3 is an 'all-in-one' system that builds on the brand's high reputation, adding Bluetooth for streaming music and an improved multi-format CD player. Simply plug it in and the R4 Mk3 will provide room-filling sound to satisfy the most discerning listener. It's also ideal for technophobes, thanks to its simple RotoDial controller. The R4 Mk3 is available in a choice of stylish finishes, including white, black and walnut veneer.

Ruark Audio's R4 Mk3 IMS (Integrated Music System)



KEY FEATURES

- **Wireless music streaming** Stream all your music from a compatible Bluetooth device using the R4's built-in aptX Bluetooth receiver.
- **Built in DAB/DAB+ and FM tuners** Listen to your favourite radio stations in beautiful large-scale sound.
- **Enhanced multi-format CD player** The R4 Mk3 features a slot-loading CD player which supports CD-Audio, MP3, AAC and WMA.
- **Analogue and digital connections** You can link up a turntable via the audio inputs or use the digital connection for a TV.
- **Easy on the eye** The organic light-emitting diode (OLED) display enables programme information to be clearly seen, whatever your viewing angle.

 ruarkaudio

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2015/16 LONDON SEASON HIGHLIGHTS



FRIDAY 22 JANUARY 7.30PM Cadogan Hall

JOSHUA BELL (violin & director) **STEVEN ISSERLIS** (cello)

Brahms Double Concerto, **Beethoven** Symphony No. 8



TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 7.30PM St Martin-in-the-Fields

SIMON BLENDIS (violin & director) **LEON BOSCH** (double bass)

ROBERT SMISSEN (viola) **STEPHEN ORTON** (cello)

Woolrich *To the Silver Bow* (world premiere), **Bach** Concerto for Two Violins



FRIDAY 15 APRIL 7.30PM Cadogan Hall

SIR NEVILLE MARRINER (conductor) **TILL FELLNER** (piano)

Mozart Symphony No. 35, **Mozart** Piano Concerto No. 22, **Bizet** Symphony No. 1



WEDNESDAY 11 MAY 7.30PM Kings Place

ACADEMY CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

Prokofiev Overture on Hebrew Themes, **Dohnányi** Sextet, **Brahms** Horn Trio

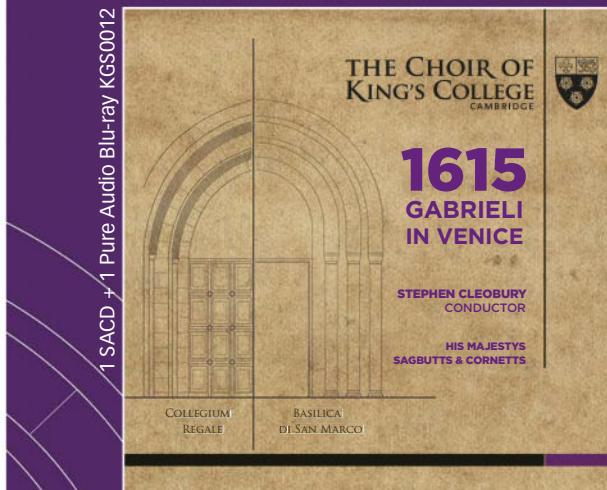
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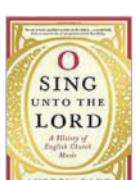
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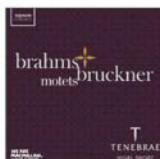
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BBC music

REVIEWS

110 CDs, Books & DVDs rated by expert critics



Recording of the Month

Conductor Nigel Short and his Tenebrae choir head to the 19th century for a brilliantly thought-out and sublimely performed recording of motets by Brahms and Bruckner, p70



'Tis the season to be jolly imaginative



Spare a thought for our reviewer Terry Blain, whose Christmas listening began in September as he set about the task of compiling our seasonal round-up (p72). Actually don't, as the range, quality and sheer imagination of this year's crop of releases was enough to have him raising an early festive glass – for 'task', read 'pleasure'. Two of the works profiled in our 'forgotten gems' feature on p20 receive fine new recordings, and there are superb choral discs from the likes of Stile Antico and the choirs of Trinity College, Cambridge and St Thomas Church, New York. The last of these, sadly, is notably poignant, as it is under the baton of the much loved John Scott, who died in August. **Rebecca Franks** *Reviews Editor*

Our Recording of the Month features in one of the **BBC Music Magazine** podcasts
free from iTunes or www.classical-music.com

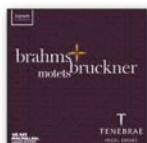
RECORDING OF THE MONTH



IMMACULATE VOICES:
Tenebrae bring focus
to beautiful motets

A strange but captivating rite

Stephen Johnson experiences the curious union of Brahms and Bruckner



BRAHMS • BRUCKNER

Brahms: *Fest- und Gedenksprüche*; *Ave Maria*; *How lovely are Thy dwellings*; *Three Motets*, Op. 110; *Geistliches Lied*, Op. 30; Bruckner: *Aequalis Nos 1 & 2*; *Virga Jesse*; *Ecce sacerdos Christus factus est*; *Locus iste*; *Os justi*; *Ave Maria*; *Tota pulchra es*

Tenebrae/Nigel Short; Mark Templeton, Helen Vollam, Patrick Jackman (trombone)
Signum SIGCD 430 74 mins

CHRIS O'DONOVAN, SUSAN PORTER-THOMAS

In their own lifetimes, Brahms and Bruckner stood on either side of an ideological fault-line. Brahms was held up as the great 'Classical-Romantic', Bruckner was a poster boy for the Wagnerian 'progressives'.

Spiritually too they seemed poles apart. Brahms was a declared atheist, Bruckner a fervent Roman Catholic. Yet, fascinatingly, both shared an intense preoccupation with religious texts and imagery, married to a lively interest in the church music from the Baroque and Renaissance past. In striking parallel, Bruckner and Brahms explored all

this in a series of exquisite short choral works which, though musically much more concentrated, can be every bit as rewarding as the symphonies – they're miniatures only in time-scale.

By interweaving some of the best

of these in this imaginative way, Nigel Short and Tenebrae have come up with a beautifully balanced and

Tenebrae have come up with a beautifully balanced programme

contrasted programme. Sampling individual pieces will its rewards of course, but experiencing the disc whole takes the listener to another level. Short's decision to use two of Bruckner's *Aequali* for

FURTHER LISTENING

Tenebrae

RUSSIAN TREASURES

Choral works by Gretchaninov, Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky etc
Tenebrae/Nigel Short
Signum SIGCD 900 61:27 mins



'Tenebrae's ultra-deep and resonant basses are immediately evident as the voices unfurl upwards in the opening Gretchaninov track. ... these highly focused performances reveal the magnificent craft of some glorious music' *March 2014*

PARRY

Songs of Farewell; plus choral works by Howells, Holst, Bennett, Tavener, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Sullivan and Harris
Tenebrae/Nigel Short
Signum SIGCD 267 75:54 mins



'Tenebrae's account of Parry's *Songs of Farewell* abounds in subtleties of phrasing and telling distinctions of dynamic, yet flows beautifully' *Christmas 2011*

VICTORIA • LOBO

Requiem Mass, 1605; Lobo: *Versa est in luctum*; Lamentations
Tenebrae/Nigel Short
Signum SIGCD 248 79:04 mins



'The Requiem is written for six voices, but this choir of 20 never seems lumbered or unbalanced. They are perfectly tuned... and one is rarely aware of intrusive individual singers. This recording does justice both to the genius of Victoria and to the musicality of Tenebrae.' *June 2011*

trombones as prelude and postlude was an inspiration – rather like a priestly invocation and dismissal at a strange but captivating religious rite. The beauty of sound and dignified intensity of expression Tenebrae create in the opening of the first choral number, Bruckner's *Virga Jesse*, would be impressive in themselves, but with the ear prepared by the first *Aequalis* the effect is even more telling. If the first of Brahms's *Fest- und Gedenksprüche* initially sounds rather matter-of-fact, down-to-earth

after Bruckner's luxurious mysticism, by the time we reach the quietly ecstatic ending of the third motet the *bürgerlich* Northern Protestant mask has dropped. And again, what superb singing: technically immaculate, somehow lucid and voluptuously beautiful at the same time. (At times the women's voices sound so pure you might even mistake them for boys.)

Putting the Brahms and Bruckner *Ave Maria* settings not quite side-by-side, but near enough for comparison was similarly inspired. The rapturous 'Amen' conclusion of Brahms's *Geistliches Lied* makes a wonderful conclusion to the choral sequence, then Bruckner touchingly adds his own wordless Amen in the final

trombone *Aequalis*. The whole disc leaves one thinking that, if only these two men could have been freed from the artistic-political constraints and clamour of their time, they might have been able to appreciate and enjoy each other's genius. Fortunately there are no such constraints for us now. The recording captures the gorgeous Temple Church acoustic faithfully, yet no detail is lost.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



ON THE PODCAST

Hear excerpts and a discussion of this recording on the **BBC Music Magazine podcast**, available free on iTunes or at www.classical-music.com

Q&A

NIGEL SHORT

Tenebrae's director tells REBECCA FRANKS about the contrasting strengths of Bruckner and Brahms's motets



Why did you decide to pair Bruckner and Brahms?

Tenebrae is a virtuoso choir that tackles all areas of repertoire. This is a genre that we hadn't explored in any great depth but I did want to cover it eventually. The impetus came from our sound engineer Andrew Mellor, who lost his father to cancer. And a few years ago we also lost Tenebrae's co-founder Barbara Pollock to cancer. So we decided to do a disc whose proceeds would go to a cancer charity. I knew pretty much instantly what I wanted to record: the Brahms *Fest- und Gedenksprüche*, Op. 109. They aren't well known in the UK but they are gorgeous pieces. This music suited us instantly.

What did putting these two composers side by side reveal?

Well, there were no surprises. We know the strengths and weaknesses of both composers and I was lucky enough to be able to choose a handful of pieces by each that show off the composers at their best. The rich density of the harmonic language of the Brahms was glorious to sing and has extraordinary moments, as in the *Geistliches Lied*. But also in the thinned-out Bruckner, the harmonic progressions and tension he creates with just four parts is extraordinary. The *Christus factus est* is a little choral symphony in itself and has so much atmosphere.

And why did you decide to include the two short trombone works to open and close the album?

When I'm programming concerts I like to come up with a sequence of music rather than a list of pieces, and it's nice to bookend things. We're singing the Brahms and Bruckner on tour with some chorales by Reger but on disc I thought it was good to have a change of sonority. It sets the tone and gives it gravitas. A lot of this music is intensely spiritual. It was difficult to choose one of the choral pieces just to ease you into the album but the trombones do it brilliantly and of course we could then use them in the Brahms *Ecce sacerdos magnus*. It would have been a bit odd to have them on just one track but this way you get that other colour.

THIS MONTH'S CRITICS

Our critics number many of the top music specialists whose knowledge and enthusiasm are second to none



George Hall writer, editor, translator

George studied at the Royal College of Music and now writes widely on classical music and opera, especially for *The Guardian*, *The Stage* and *Opera* magazine. He has also contributed to various opera guides, the *New Oxford Companion to Music*, and most recently *30-Second Opera*.

John Allison editor, *Opera*; critic, *Sunday Telegraph*

Nicholas Anderson Baroque specialist

Terry Blain writer

Kate Bolton-Porciatti lecturer, New York University, Florence

Garry Booth jazz writer & critic

Geoff Brown critic, *The Times*

Michael Church writer, critic

The Independent

Christopher Cook broadcaster, critic

Martin Cotton radio producer

Christopher Dingle Professor of Music, Birmingham Conservatoire

Misha Donat producer, writer

Jessica Duchen critic, novelist

Hilary Finch critic, broadcaster

Malcolm Hayes biographer, critic

Julian Haylock writer, editor

Ivan Hewett broadcaster, critic

Daniel Jaffé writer, critic

Erica Jeal critic, *The Guardian*; deputy editor, *Opera*

Stephen Johnson writer, BBC Radio 3 broadcaster

Berta Joncus senior lecturer, Goldsmiths, University of London

Max Loppert critic, *Opera*

Jon Lusk world music journalist

Andrew McGregor presenter, BBC Radio 3's CD Review

David Nice writer, biographer

Roger Nichols French music specialist

Bayan Northcott writer, composer

Tim Parry writer, editor

Anna Picard writer, critic

George Pratt emeritus professor of music, University of Huddersfield

Anthony Prysor lecturer, Goldsmiths, University of London

Paul Riley journalist, critic

Michael Scott Rohan author, editor

Nick Shave journalist

Jeremy Siepmann biographer, editor

Jan Smaczy professor of music, Queen's, Belfast

Geoffrey Smith presenter, Radio 3

Michael Tanner critic, *The Spectator*

Roger Thomas critic

Kate Wakeling writer, researcher

Helen Wallace consultant editor, BBC Music

Barry Witherden critic

Key to symbols Star ratings are provided for both the performance itself and either the recording's sound quality or a DVD's presentation

Outstanding

★★★★★

Excellent

★★★★

Good

★★★

Disappointing

★★

Poor

★

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CHRISTMAS CHOICE

Terry Blain picks the best of this year's crop, including *Stile Antico*'s Renaissance Christmas, French noëls from *Le Maître de Toulouse* and gems from Polish and German radio archives

BBC MUSIC CHRISTMAS CHOICE

Christmas on Fifth Avenue

Terry Blain is impressed by a New York choir's Britten and Rutter



DANCING DAY

Works by Britten, Rutter, Martin, Hadley, Scott, Ledger and Mathias
Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, Fifth Avenue, New York/John Scott
Resonus RES10158 63:58 mins

The choir of Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York has been gradually building a reputation as a beacon of excellence in Anglican worship, and this is the second CD it has recorded with the Resonus company. Sadly it will be the last under John Scott, the inspirational

director of music at Saint Thomas's, who died unexpectedly in August.

The heart of the programme is a limpid, vernal fresh account of Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*, sung by boy trebles as the composer intended. The tinglingly evocative

The abiding impression is one of intimacy, innocence and wonder

playing of harpist Sara Cutler impresses, and there is glowing solo work by choristers John Dominick Mignardi in 'That yonge child', Sehjin Jo in 'Balulalow' and others. And while there's some gleamingly forthright singing in *tutti* passages, the abiding impression is one of

intimacy, innocence and wonder. The main coupling is John Rutter's *Dancing Day*, and John Scott's influence can be clearly felt in the bright tonal coloration of the unison opening to 'Angelus ad virginem', the justly balanced part-singing in 'Personent hodie' and the delectable poise of a hushed 'Coventry Carol'.

Half a dozen shorter pieces add further attraction, and the sound is excellent. This is a moving, memorable recital.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

ON THE WEBSITE

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www.classical-music.com



NOËL FRANÇAIS

Works by Poulenc, Bleuse, Mouton, Bouzignac, Moulinié, Clérambault, Charpentier, Roger-Ducasse, plus traditional noëls arr. Opstad
La Maîtrise de Toulouse/Mark Opstad; Géraldine Bruley (viola da gamba), William Whitehead (organ)
Regent REGCD470 77:08 mins

La Maîtrise de Toulouse is the mixed-voice children's choir of the Toulouse Conservatoire, and has recently added tenor and bass sections. The results are highly impressive in this delectable programme of French Christmas music. In an opening sequence of motets from the medieval period, those of Bouzignac stand out particularly, gem-like miniatures featuring translucent solo work from various sopranos. In the modern section, Poulenc's *Quatre Motets* gain extra vibrancy from having young voices sing them, as does a group of traditional noëls. An utter pleasure.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

★★★★★
★★★★★



VOM HIMMEL HOCH...

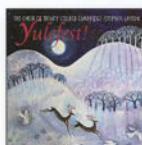
Christmas carols
Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Rita Streich, Elisabeth Grümmer, Erna Berger et al
Audite AUDITE95741 67 mins

Post-war austerity hit the record industry hard in Germany, and in the 1950s the Berlin radio station RIAS began making programmes to brighten up the Christmas season. The artists used included some of the greatest singers of the 20th century – Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Rita Streich, Elisabeth Grümmer among them – and this fascinating selection from RIAS archives captures them in

sepia-tinted mono recordings which present the voices more fulsomely than most modern digital discs. The repertoire is mainly traditional German, the arrangements often unusual. It's a fascinating collection.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★



YULEFEST!

Christmas music

Trinity College Choir/Stephen Layton
Hyperion CDA 68087 65:13 mins

Since going to Trinity College, Cambridge nine years ago conductor Stephen Layton has taken its choir to new levels of achievement. And not just in ecclesiastical repertoire: the version of *Jingle Bells* which opens this recital is full of pep and sparkle. In fact all the popular selections – *White Christmas*, *The Christmas Song*, among others – sound notably relaxed and idiomatic, the choir's stylistic versatility confidently demonstrated. Arrangements are often interestingly unfamiliar, and for sheer fun and virtuosity Robert Rice's arrangement of *Sleigh Ride* takes the seasonal biscuit.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★



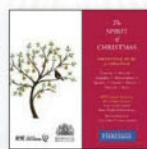
LUTOSŁAWSKI

Twenty Polish Christmas Carols
Piotr Kusiewicz (tenor),
Waldemar Malicki (piano)
Dux 0383 37:48 mins

Lutosławski's *Twenty Polish Christmas Carols* (see p26) are like Britten's folksong arrangements – not so much providing 'accompaniments' for the sung melodies as re-clothing them in new colours and probing uncharted harmonic implications. As such they make fascinating listening, especially in the original version for voice and piano, a rarity on record. This new issue raids the Gdańsk Radio vaults for a 1986 performance by Piotr Kusiewicz, whose sappy tenor and intelligent artistry ensure a real tang of authenticity. The lack of texts and short playing time are potential drawbacks.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★



THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

Works by Thorne, Menotti, Saunders, Hewitt Jones, Spratley, Curtis, Moore, Warlock and Kelly
Joanna Lumley (narrator); RTÉ Concert Orchestra; Royal Ballet Sinfonia/
Gavin Sutherland, Barry Wordsworth
Heritage HTGCD 299 72:24 mins

Keen to stop a pitch-imperfect relative crooning along to carols over Christmas luncheon? This recording may be the answer. The only voices on it are in Adam Saunders's *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, where the creamy-toned Joanna Lumley leads the narration. That's one of six world premieres on this orchestral anthology, the others including Gordon Thorne's *Festive Overture*, a sparkling medley of familiar tunes, a thoughtful *What child is this?* by Thomas Hewitt Jones (whose carol *Lullay, my liking*, commissioned last year by this magazine, is on this month's cover CD) and Matthew Curtis's bustling *Christmas Spirit*. Crisp, energetic performances from both the orchestras and their respective conductors.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★



RESPIGHI

Lauda per la natività del signore; plus works by Poulenc, Sandström, Kaminski, Lauridsen and Raphael
Rundfunkchor Berlin; Polyphonia Ensemble Berlin/Nicolas Fink, Māris Sīrmais
Carus 83.473 51:31 mins

Away from the sound and fury of the Roman trilogy tone poems Respighi was capable of subtleties his detractors may find surprising. One of them is the cantata *Lauda per la Natività del Signore*, which tells the story of Christ's birth from the point of view of Mary, the shepherds and the angels (see p26). Both the choral and solo singing on this glowing new recording are of high quality, the wind playing delightfully coloured. The couplings are also excellent, though more Respighi would have been even better.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★



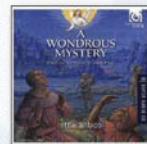
CZECH & MORAVIAN CHRISTMAS CAROLS

Arrangements by Jan Jirásek
Jitro Czech Children's Choir; plus various instrumentalists/Jiří Skopal
Navona Records NV6010 66:59 mins

Jitro' means 'daybreak' in Czech, and the bright, gleaming attack of the girls in the Jitro Czech Children's Choir is indeed like a brilliant ray of sunshine slicing through the darkness. The sheer ripeness and vibrancy of the singing under longtime artistic director Jiří Skopal is infectious, and when you add the peppery arrangements of composer Jan Jirásek to the mix – they feature marvellously raspy traditional instruments – this sequence of Czech and Moravian carols becomes irresistible. The bold, vivid recording matches the music-making, and patchy documentation is the only let-down of this package.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★



A WONDROUS MYSTERY: Renaissance choral works for Christmas

Works by Clemens, Eccard, Handl, Hassler, H Praetorius & M Praetorius
Stile Antico
Harmonia Mundi HMU 807575 (hybrid CD/SACD) 72:57 mins

The *Missa Pastores quidnam vidistis* of Flemish composer Clemens non Papa provides the spine to this recital of Renaissance music for Christmas. Its five movements are interspersed with other pieces, Praetorius's *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen*, Handl's cheerful *Canite tuba* and Hassler's ringing *Hodie Christus natus est* among them. Stile Antico's performances are technically impeccable, though a little more exuberance would be welcome in extroverted music. The sinuous yearning of Clemens's *Agnes Dei* is, though, a triumph of fluid phrasing and dynamic shaping, and a reminder of the formidable credentials of this group, currently celebrating its tenth anniversary.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★

IN BRIEF

Reviewed by Terry Blain

DECEMBER CELEBRATION

Carols by Adamo, Bokom, Corigliano, Garner, Gruber, Heggie, Woolf et al
Volti Chorus; Musicians of the New Century Chamber Orchestra/
Dawn Harms
Pentatone PTC5186537 57:06 mins

Jake Heggie, Gordon Getty and John Corigliano all feature in this anthology of new American carols, but the programme is variable in quality, as is the solo singing. Pleasant if undistinctive.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★

LET THE ANGELS SING

European Christmas carols and songs arr. for recorder & choir
Michala Petri (recorder);
Danish National Vocal Ensemble/
Michael Bojensen
OUR Recordings 6.220615 52:20 mins

If you like your carols drizzled with recorder embellishments, look no further. The soloist is the outstanding Michala Petri, though even she can't stop the novelty wearing thin.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★

CHRISTMAS MUSIC THROUGH THE AGES

50 pieces from 6th to 20th centuries
Saydisc CDSDL437 156:12 mins (two discs)

Saydisc celebrates its 50th anniversary with this richly entertaining medieval-flavoured anthology featuring the sound of choirs, handbells, a Breton bagpipe and musical boxes. It's never dull.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★

A VERY ENGLISH CHRISTMAS

Works by Bax, Edwards, Gardner, Hickox, Knight, Lane, Ledger, Preston, Radcliffe, Robinson, Warlock et al
Tenebrae/Nigel Short
Bene Arte SIGCD9 02 55:35

Lots of familiar titles here, in largely unfamiliar settings by Gardner, Hickox, Preston and others. The Warlock group is specially good. Sumptuous performances, and perfectly judged sound.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★

ANALEKTA

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ALAIN LEFÈVRE



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CHARLES RICHARD-HAMELIN

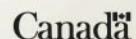


CHOPIN

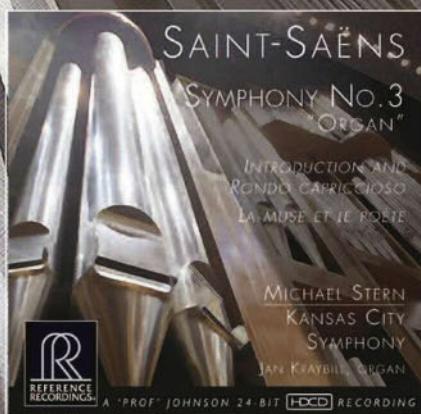
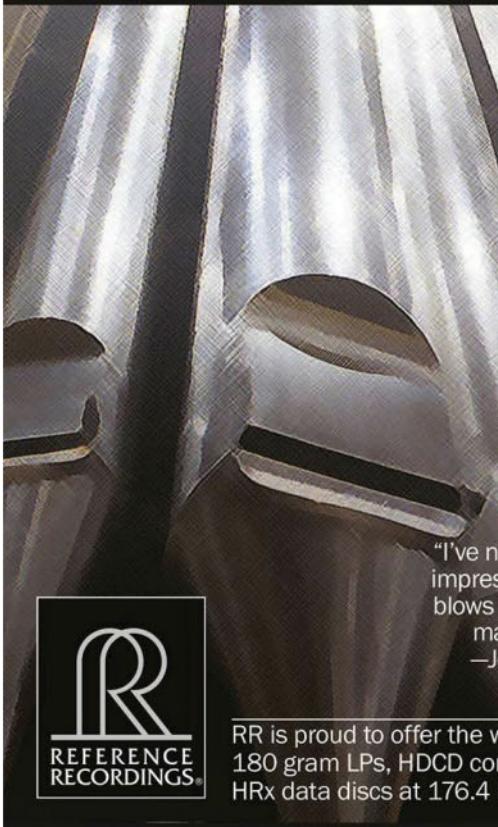
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ORCHESTRAL

Daniel Harding rises to the challenge of Mahler's Sixth; plus *Valery Gergiev* makes a superb traversal of Shostakovich's complete symphonies and concertos with the Mariinsky on DVD

BBC MUSIC ORCHESTRAL CHOICE

Intimacy on a grand scale

Stephen Johnson admires the collegial spirit of this Brahms Fourth



ROMANTIC ENSEMBLE:
Iván Fischer keeps the
larger picture in focus



BRAHMS

Symphony No. 4; Hungarian Dances Nos 3, 7 & 11; folk music
Budapest Festival Orchestra/
Iván Fischer
Channel Classics CCS SA 35315
(hybrid CD/SACD) 51:26 mins

It may seem odd to praise a Brahms Four for being like chamber music, but I don't think I've ever heard a recording of this symphony that comes so close to the spirit of rich but intimate masterpieces like the Piano Quintet or the Clarinet Quintet. The very opening, so difficult to bring off in performance – it's more

like a late piano piece transcribed for orchestra – is beautifully judged here, with just a hint of a pause on the first note. And throughout Fischer is able to achieve something like a pianist's rubato without the sense of distortion that so often results.

There's some beautiful dialogue between instrumental voices,

This is an orchestra whose players listen to each other intently

especially among the woodwind. Sympathetic recording helps, of course, but you can tell this is an orchestra whose players listen to each other intently. The larger picture is always what matters. The ebb and flow of passion – the Romantic Brahms – is nevertheless

at ease with the Classicising side of his character. In the finale the roots in Bach's great solo violin Chaconne are evident, but at the same time this sounds like a tragedy born of its times – as though Brahms's initial enthusiasm for German unification had yielded to a deeper intuition of where it might all end.

The three *Hungarian Dances* are a pleasant but hardly necessary add-on – the Symphony would have been recommendable in itself. It may not displace the classic Carlos Kleiber on DG, but it comes close.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



ON THE WEBSITE

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DUTILLEUX

Symphony No. 1; Deux sonnets de Jean Cassou; Métaboles
Paul Armin Edelmann (baritone);
Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie
Rheinland-Pfalz/Karl-Heinz Steffens
Capriccio C5242 54:34 mins

While the poet Jean Cassou was imprisoned in Toulouse for Resistance activities, he wrote 33 sonnets, published clandestinely in 1944. Henri Dutilleux, whose brother Paul spent five years in Stalag VIIIC, was attracted to the poems by their 'contained lyricism, depth and rather abstract qualities', and set two of them in 1954. The baritone Paul Armin Edelmann here delivers powerful and mostly accurate performances, holding his own in the first of these against some vivid brass writing. Elsewhere, though, the music suffers from rather weak (or weakly recorded) violin lines that are regularly obscured by both brass and woodwind. This partly contributes to a more general lack of bite in the faster or more aggressive passages.

At the very beginning of *Métaboles*, the string pizzicatos sound rather limp instead of displaying the required 'incantatory' character, possibly inspired by Stravinsky's *Les noces*, to which Paul Tortelier had taken Dutilleux when they were both students. Anyone who was ever driven by Dutilleux through Paris will know that he was not averse to speed, and here both 'Incantoire' and the *scherzo* of the First Symphony are too slow – the latter, at 6:30, one whole minute slower than Daniel Barenboim's version (available now only as part of a four-disc set from Erato), which Dutilleux loved for its headlong pace (though just within the metronome indication). *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



RISING POWER:
patron of the
arts, Louis XIV

Music for the Sun King

CD Review's **Andrew McGregor** explores a collection of stunning performances celebrating Louis XIV



Three hundred years after Louis XIV's death, *Harmonia Mundi* has called on its resources to

illustrate the Sun King's musical tastes, patronage and pleasures, with *Les menus plaisirs de Louis XIV*. We begin 'Before Versailles': Vespers by Giovanni Rovetta for celebrations in Venice of the birth of Louis in 1638, Cantus Cölln and Concerto Palatino making a splendid sound in the Magnificat. Then comes the 'Ballet Royal de la Nuit', Louis's debut as the sun, with Sébastien Daucé's Ensemble Correspondances illustrating a new

Hear the kind of music Louis XIV liked at bedtime

dawn. The next pair of CDs imagine how 'An Ordinary Day at Versailles' might have sounded, with morning Mass in the Chapelle Royale when new motets by one of Louis's favourites, Michel-Richard de Lalande, were a feature. Two of the finest are here: a Miserere from Philippe Herreweghe's *La Chapelle Royale* and Lalande's great setting of the psalm 'By the Waters of Babylon' from *Les Arts Florissants*. Then Lalande's symphonies to accompany the king's supper, and the kind of music Louis liked at bedtime: Couperin (from Gli

Incogniti) and the guitar music of Robert de Visée. The next pair of discs introduce us to 'His Majesty's Entertainments', the composers and music that flourished under the patronage of a king who was also a lutenist, harpsichordist and dancer. Keyboard and chamber music by François Couperin, viol music by Marin Marais, and dance pieces played by harpist Andrew Lawrence-King, from the pioneering 1700 collection *Chorégraphie*. Next comes 'A Masterpiece of French Opera': two discs of Lully's *Armide*, the

culmination of the composer's *tragédies en musique*, the operatic spectacles so

actively encouraged by the King. It's Herreweghe's second and finest recording, with Guillemette Laurens an eloquent *Armide*, altogether a stylish and dramatic realisation of Lully at his peak. Finally comes 'Pomp and Circumstance': music for grand occasions from birthdays to funerals by Charpentier, Lalande, Lully and Campra, performed with gravitas by *Les Arts Florissants* and *La Chapelle Royale*. Well-chosen works, fine performances, and excellent essays and illustrations throughout. *Harmonia Mundi* HMX 2908717.26; 10 discs



DUTILLEUX

Métaboles; L'arbre des songes; Symphony No. 2

Augustin Hadelich (violin); Seattle Symphony/Ludovic Morlot
Seattle Symphony Media SSM 1007
73:02 mins

Dutilleux's centenary next January is being celebrated not only by a plaque on his Paris apartment but, even better, by recordings of his music. The highlight of this Seattle disc is undoubtedly the violin playing of Augustin Hadelich in *L'arbre des songes*. From a poetically searching start he allows the music to build through spectacular fireworks to a radiant, confident ending, and in the fast *spiccato* passages allows us to hear the pitches of the notes more clearly than does Isaac Stern, for whom the work was written.

The warm recording, with some three seconds of echo, suits this work well, as it does the Second Symphony. Here again Ludovic Morlot draws excellent playing from the orchestra, and my only puzzle is over the final chord. Dutilleux, feeling the original C sharp major triad was too definite an end for this interrogatory work, later added six more notes to produce a complex 'blues' chord. I think Morlot chooses this substitute – but if so the additions are too close to inaudibility. The disappointment is *Métaboles*, where the generous acoustic softens the impact we find in George Szell's 1965 version with the Cleveland Orchestra. *Roger Nichols*

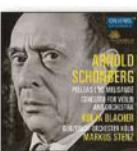
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

★★★★
★★★★

recording. Andris Nelsons conducted the Boston Symphony in a Prom of peerless detail and electrifying sweep. Harding begins like him, with a very energetic and clear march momentum; but he doesn't quite raise it one notch, like Nelsons did, after the quiet mountain idyll at the heart of the opening movement. The *Andante*, placed second – too much the fashion, in my opinion, when the *Scherzo* always works much better in that position – doesn't have quite the same inwardness as Nelson achieved.

Yet with the *Scherzo* and Finale Harding is well up there with the greats. The grinding horn chords which pull the *Scherzo*'s lopsided childhood reverie into the haunted wood as well as the annihilating final climax are superbly, spine-tinglingly executed; the vast march-mania of the last half hour has both clarity and weight, with all the terrifying fulcrums brilliantly registering in a close but vivid recording. Above all it's the Bavarian Radio Symphony, with its fabulous first trumpet, baleful, full-toned tuba and winsome oboist, which collectively confirms itself as one of the top five orchestras in the world. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING



SCHOENBERG

Pelleas und Melisande; Violin Concerto

Kolja Blacher (violin); Gürzenich-Orchester Köln/Markus Stenz
Oehms OC 445 69:35 mins

'Enormously complicated', was Mahler's verdict on Schoenberg's symphonic poem *Pelleas und Melisande*. Maybe a tactful way of saying 'too complicated'. Poised between the luxurious richness of *Gurrelieder* and the hyper-inventive but tremendously exciting First Chamber Symphony, it often seems merely dense in comparison. But from this recording I'd guess that conductor Markus Stenz and the Oehms team have done a lot of work picking out leading voices and balancing the riotously profuse counterpoint. The result has a compelling narrative cohesion, offering a kind of paraphrase of the *Pelleas* opera Schoenberg planned but never carried out. In terms of colour and texture, too, it's a feast. If it doesn't ultimately emerge as a masterpiece to compare with the two mentioned above, it still stands



MAHLER

Symphony No. 6

Bavarian Radio SO/Daniel Harding
BR Klassik 900132 82:28 mins

The clever ECG design and the colour photograph inside the booklet suggest that Mahler's Sixth ought to be nicknamed 'The Hammerblow' after those two great apocalypse moments in the finale representing the dull cosmic thud of overwhelming fate. At first I wondered if Daniel Harding was going to rise to them. Just before I listened to this live

as unique and un-ignorable. So too does the much later Violin Concerto. Here, for me, there's a different problem. At times everything seems magnificently, grippingly in focus; at others, Schoenberg's imagination and the self-imposed rigours of the 12-tone technique rub against each other uneasily. Part of the problem may lie in the performance. Kolja Blacher's energetic conviction and commanding technical grasp of this hair-raisingly difficult solo part make the first few minutes of the first movement and great stretches of the finale terrifically exciting. But mystery, delicacy and transparency don't seem to come to him quite so readily. Often he just seems to me too loud or too eager to get on, as in the exquisite long melody that begins the slow movement. Certainly the uneven final impression isn't all Schoenberg's fault. *Stephen Johnson*

PERFORMANCE (PELLEAS) ★★★★
(VIOLIN CONCERTO) ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

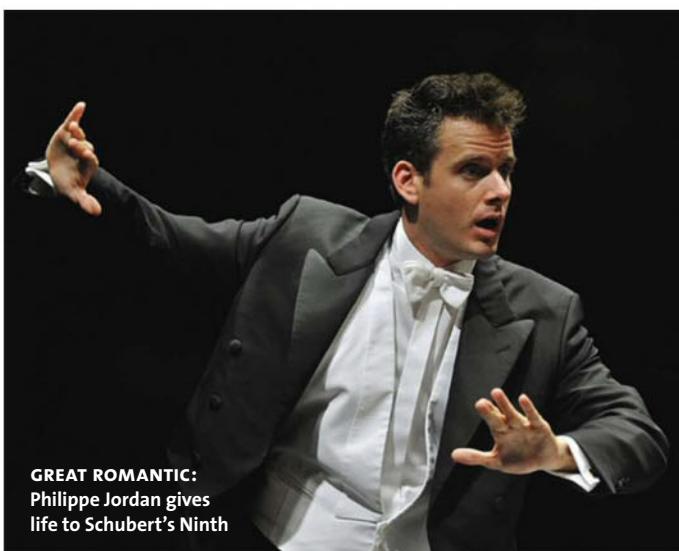


SCHUBERT

Symphonies Nos 8 & 9
Vienna Symphony/Philippe Jordan
Solo Musica WS 009 76:57 mins

Having heard Bernard Haitink's dead-straight Schubert Ninth at the BBC Proms with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, I realise there are some masterpieces which need the conductor to do rather more than simply breathe what's on the printed page into life. Philippe Jordan, who's often tended to apply a late-Romantic conducting approach to earlier works, enriches with just that extra degree in these always engaging, sometimes challenging performances. The slightest dynamic lift to phrases which are unadorned in the score gives a life behind the eyes, the longer-term crescendos are magnificent and Jordan finds exactly the conflict in the progress of the night-watch march of the Ninth's second movement I found missing in Haitink's interpretation.

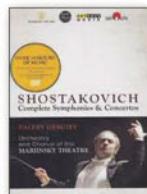
Dynamic extremes are even more pronounced in the *Unfinished* Eighth, defiantly tragic when not bittersweet, starting with a whisper and especially affecting in the dying falls of the *Andante con moto*. The only movement in the two pieces that doesn't entirely convince me is the *Scherzo* of the *Great*; I've been spoilt by Claudio Abbado's swansong recording to expect something more



GREAT ROMANTIC:
Philippe Jordan gives
life to Schubert's Ninth

of a lift in the outer sections, and the wind-band song of the trio needs to be more earthy; this is the only department of the excellent Vienna Symphony which seems slightly under-defined. And why not do the second-half repeat – or, for that matter, the one in the finale? The spacious Musikverein live recording highlights well-balanced textures, and is as alive as the playing. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE (EIGHTH) ★★★★
(NINTH) ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



SHOSTAKOVICH

DVD Symphonies Nos 1-15; Violin Concertos Nos 1 & 2; Cello Concertos Nos 1 & 2; Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 2
Soloists; Mariinsky Theatre Chorus & Orchestra/Valery Gergiev
Arthaus DVD: 107551 (8 discs); Blu-ray: 107552 (4 discs)

Valery Gergiev is both a great and inspiring conductor and one of today's greatest orchestral trainers: witness the remarkable playing of the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra throughout this set of all 15 symphonies and six concertos by Shostakovich. Performed live in the Salle Pleyel in Paris, none of the concerts appear to have been patched, which makes the consistent excellence of the mostly young Mariinsky players and chorus the more remarkable.

Rather more variable are the soloists for the six concertos. Most successful are young violinist Alena Baeva, who gives a sensitive and appropriately

fiery performance of Violin Concerto No. 2, and Denis Matsuev in the admittedly less demanding Piano Concerto No. 2, performed with infectious *joie de vivre*. If Daniil Trifonov's Piano Concerto No. 1 (solo trumpeter Timur Martynov seated near his left shoulder) seems less special, this is largely because other soloists have already set such a high standard for this quicksilver work; Gergiev and Trifonov never quite capture the work's sheer cheek, despite their exhilarating speed in its final pages. Of the two cellists, Gautier Capuçon, for all his glossy and beautiful tone in Concerto No. 1, misses the work's cock-a-snook character and its underlying anguish; in Concerto No. 2 Mario Brunello, winner of the 1986 International Tchaikovsky Competition, offers less beauty of tone but far more in terms of expressiveness. Most disappointing is Vadim Repin in Violin Concerto No. 1. His tuning is uncharacteristically queasy throughout the first movement, and for much of the following *Scherzo* has poor coordination with the orchestra, though it all finally coheres thanks to Gergiev and the Mariinsky players' exuberant energy.

All the symphonies are given excellent, sometimes outstanding performances, with superb soloists (bass Mikhail Petrenov and soprano Veronika Dzhioeva) in Nos 13 and 14. There's just a few blots in the presentation of this superb package. The filming, originally for television, suffers the occasional mishaps of live events, including mis-cued shots and sometimes distractingly fidgety switches between cameras. The extra 'film', poorly cobbled together from Gergiev's spoken introductions to each work (an optional extra

through the entire set) and pre-existing documentaries, both Soviet and more recent, fails to identify any of the talking heads (including Maxim Shostakovich and Rudolf Barshai). Nor does it help that the accompanying slim, handsomely produced book gets several of its facts wrong, such as the date of theatre director Meyerhold's arrest.

Daniel Jaffé

PERFORMANCES ★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★
EXTRAS ★★★

★★★★
★★★★
★★★★



SMETANA

DVD Mavlast
Czech Philharmonic/Jiri Belohlavek
EuroArts 2072758 86 mins

The six movements of Smetana's symphonic poem cycle *Mavlast* (My Country) sets the heroism of the Czech past alongside the beauties of the Bohemian countryside. The work's iconic status for Czech audiences was secured by the tradition initiated in 1952 of beginning the Prague Spring Festival on the anniversary of Smetana's death with a performance of *My Country*.

The Czech Philharmonic under its chief conductor Jiri Belohlavek is in fine form. For the opening concert of the 2014 Spring Festival, they fielded an orchestra far larger – five harps, rather than two, play the opening cadenza – than any Smetana encountered. It is a big-boned though never ponderous reading: the strings have a unanimity and rhythmic bite which keeps the interpretation vital throughout. *Vltava*, in particular, is astonishingly beautiful while *Šárka* and *Tábor* are, as they should be, operatically intense. At times the wind and brass ensemble is a little rough; the pastoral interlude in *Blaník* sounds edgy and the recording, mostly fine elsewhere, gives rather too much prominence to the piccolo at the end. Overall, this is a heart-warming rather than revelatory reading. As a concert performance it is well filmed, but visually could have been far more exciting. The director missed a trick by not showing the superb frescoes and statuary of the Smetana Hall, nor the nationally-inspired interiors of the rooms that surround it in Prague's Municipal House. *Jan Smacny*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
PICTURE AND SOUND ★★★★



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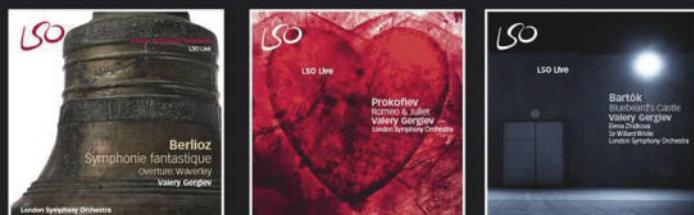


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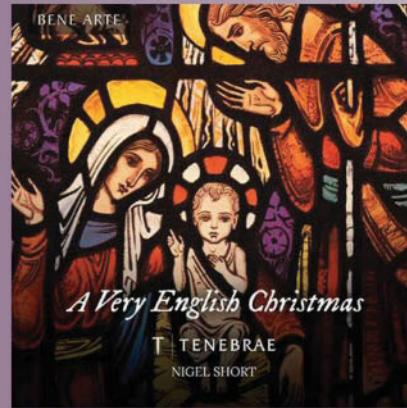
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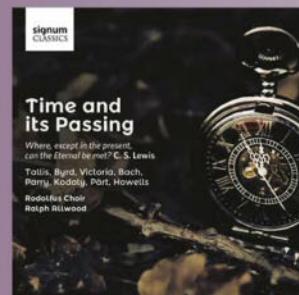
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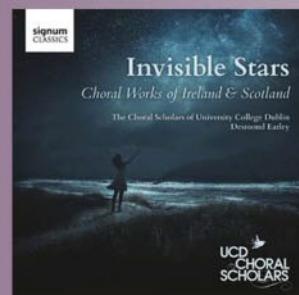
Time and its Passing
Where except in the present can the
eternal be met? C. S. Lewis

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CONCERTO

Giuliano Carmignola, Sol Gabetta and Dejan Lazić present an exceptionally fine Beethoven Triple Concerto; plus *Yuja Wang* and conductor *Lionel Bringuier* join forces for Ravel's concertos

BBC MUSIC CONCERTO CHOICE

Invention inspired by Vivaldi

Paul Riley welcomes an expressive and idiomatic *Four Seasons*

PROSELYТИISING ZEAL:
La Serenissima brings know-how to a well-loved classic



VIVALDI

The Four Seasons; Concertos for violin in *tromba marina*; Bassoon concertos, RV 496 & 501
Peter Whelan (bassoon);
La Serenissima/Adrian Chandler (violin)
Avie AV 2344 73:43 mins

From the ensemble's debut 21 years ago, Vivaldi has always been at the heart of La Serenissima's music-making. But until now violinist-director Adrian Chandler has avoided recording *The Four Seasons*. The wait has been worth it. He opts for the slightly later Manchester version whose differences of phrasing

and articulation he believes to be closer in spirit to Vivaldi's original conception, and embraces a wholesale reappraisal. The resulting freshness incinerates the cobwebs of familiarity in the heat of La Serenissima's proselytising zeal. This

La Serenissima's fresh approach grows out of *The Four Seasons* itself

fresh approach grows out of the work itself, and as a period instrument ensemble La Serenissima fully understands what an imaginative continuo section can bring to the table. Listeners who usually find the ritornello that launches *Autumn* a touch twee will be diverted by the energising thrum of guitar, and the slow movement avoids the customary

lazy doodle for harpsichord right hand. If the sheer sweep and vivacity captivates, details are just as telling. The appoggiatura Chandler applies to the end of his first solo entry in *Winter* plumbs the chill of the grave, and in the perky *Largo* he delivers an object lesson in how to decorate the music meaningfully.

Two concertos showcasing Peter Whelan's playfully agile bassoon are paired with two rare concertos for a specially constructed three-string 'violino in *tromba marina*' lending a touch of raucous exoticism.

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★

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www.classical-music.com



BEETHOVEN

Triple Concerto; The Creatures of Prometheus Overture; Egmont Overture; Coriolan Overture
Giuliano Carmignola (violin), Sol Gabetta (cello), Dejan Lazić (piano); Kammerorchester Basel/ Giovanni Antonini

Sony 88883763622 55:13 mins

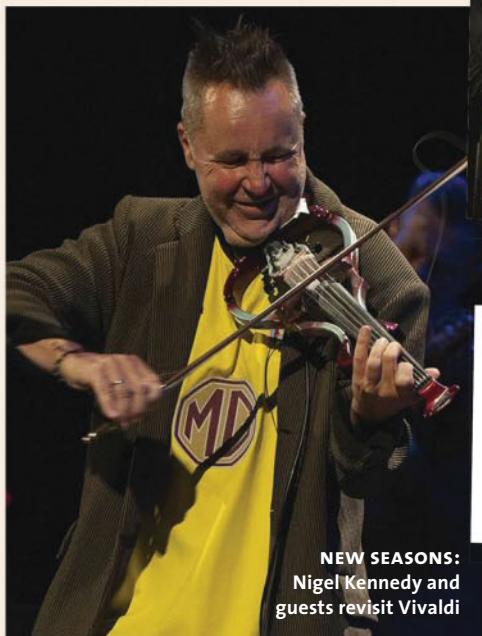
Masterwork or monsterpiece? Too often Beethoven's Triple Concerto comes across as a fitfully inspired behemoth – the one point in his concerto-composing career where he seems to wobble titanically off course. It's also a nightmare to record, so full praise to the Sony production team for finding such a convincing balance, not just between soloists and orchestra, but between the soloists themselves. It all sounds wonderfully fresh and clear.

So too does the performance. The Triple Concerto's eccentricities are joyously celebrated, which means that the masterstrokes also tell as they rarely do. The first movement in particular grips one's attention and draws the ear into countless delightful details. How is that so much of this so often gets missed? It isn't just the élan and lively intelligence that impress: I've rarely heard such a roundly enjoyable performance of the brief slow movement, which for once sounded neither perfunctory nor too short. Perhaps the Polonaise finale could have a little more swagger, but there's plenty of humour to compensate. A few tiny oddities – like the weirdly swanee-whistle-like flute in the first movement – are easily overlooked.

There's a similar exuberant clarity about the overtures, but at times the period-style crispness and metronomic objectivity turn even *Egmont* and *Coriolan* into something closer to a military cross-country run than a tragic theatrical prelude. In *Egmont* I really missed the transition, or rather lurch from grim

Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*

Paul Riley assesses four alternative takes on this evergreen masterpiece



NEW SEASONS:
Nigel Kennedy and
guests revisit Vivaldi



VIVALDI • CSÉKI

The Four Seasons • Alpha; Omega

Roby Lakatos (violin); Brussels Chamber Orchestra
Avanti 10422 (hybrid CD/SACD) 69:19 mins

VIVALDI

The Four Seasons

Nigel Kennedy (violin); Orchestra of Life
Sony 88875076722 61:09 mins

VIVALDI

The Four Seasons

OLIVER DAVIS

Anno; Anno Epilogue

Grace Davidson (soprano), Kerenza Peacock (violin),
Emma Heathcote (viola), Susie Winkworth (cello);
Trafalgar Sinfonia/Ivor Setterfield
Signum SIGCD 437 62:16 mins

VIVALDI • TARTINI • JM LECLAIR

Vivaldi: The Four Seasons; Tartini: Devil's Trill

Sonata; JM Leclair: Tambourin
James Ehnes (violin); Sydney Symphony Orchestra; Andrew
Armstrong (piano)
Onyx ONYX 4134 71:01 mins

With over 250 recordings currently listed across all formats, Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* is the concerto gift that keeps on giving. But in a crowded market place, how to stand out from the crowd? Nigel Kennedy found the answer a quarter of a century ago, combining some fabulous fiddle playing with just enough creative eccentricity to ruffle a few feathers. Now he's back for a second bite of the cherry and 'ruffle' doesn't begin to cover it. In place of the English Chamber Orchestra he deploys his own band plus a phalanx of guest artists

spanning the jazz and rock worlds; and in a mash-up that takes no hostages, he thrashes the Baroque notions of instrumental embellishment and continuo improvisation to within an inch of their lives. It's heady stuff. Diverting even...at a first listen. But for all the charm (really!) of *Spring*'s twittering mixed with actual birdsong and fey exclamation of 'tweet tweet', or the atmospheric interpolated second 'Transitoire' that precedes *Autumn*'s hunt finale, the swerves between louche cocktail piano cheesiness and drum-driven anarchic assault, threaten a car crash Kennedy just about averts. It's a *Four Seasons* that's not about Vivaldi, nor even about the violin. Try before you buy!

Hungarian violinist Roby Lakatos's 'USP' is to deliver Vivaldi 'alla gypsy' which means sporadically dressing up solo lines with a dash of paprika, and substituting cimbalom for harpsichord, which adds an intriguing dream-like dimension to *Autumn's Adagio* but elsewhere robs the music of the harpsichord's propulsive force. The support of the Brussels Chamber Orchestra is generally buoyant, but the word-painting is often under-characterised and Lakatos himself is prey to some sloppy articulation and skin-of-the-teeth negotiation of tricky passagework.

Like Lakatos, Kerenza Peacock and the Trafalgar Sinfonia opt to pair the *Seasons* with a 21st-century response. Sung with inscrutable impassivity by Grace Davidson, Oliver Davis's *Anno* sets Vivaldi's sonnets in an approachable idiom that tends to generalise the texts. But Peacock's own response to Vivaldi's 'seasonal' narrative is sprightly, even if Ivor Setterfield often favours comfortable tempos, and there's a welcome lack of sentimentality as *Winter's* fireside *Largo* beckons.

The 18th century has the field to itself for James Ehnes's first venture into the Baroque on disc – notwithstanding Tartini's *Devil's Trill* Sonata as mediated through Kreisler's realisation, its commanding cadenza a tremulous delight. The Vivaldi is less successful though since both Ehnes and his well-upholstered Sidney strings tend to play the notes rather than tell the story in a reading that, for all its elegance, is more faithful to the letter than the spirit of the score.

NIGEL KENNEDY PERFORMANCE

★★★★

RECORDING

★★★★

ROBY LAKATOS PERFORMANCE

★★

RECORDING

★★★

KERENZA PEACOCK PERFORMANCE

★★★

RECORDING

★★★

JAMES EHNES PERFORMANCE

★★★★

RECORDING

★★★★

Allegro to deliriously excited coda. *The Creatures of Prometheus* is more fun, as it should be. Even so, I don't think it will convert those who find Beethoven relentless. *Stephen Johnson*

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

CONCERTO

★★★

OVERTURES

★★★★★

RECORDING

★★★★★



KRAGGERUD

Equinox: 24 Postludes in all keys

Arctic Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra /
Henning Kraggerud (violin)
Simax PSC1348 73:08 mins

Violinist-composer Henning Kraggerud's booklet biography describes him as 'an artist of exquisite musicianship', and that's not hyperbole. Hearing him play as a Prom encore the tenth of his 24 'Postludes in All Keys', following fellow Norwegian Jostein 'Sophie's World' Gaarder's texts for *Equinox*, opened a window on a magical world. The ambition might seem pretentious: a man awaiting a possible diagnosis of Alzheimer's in Greenwich embarks on a fantasy journey through all 24 time zones, meeting strange characters twice on opposite sides of the globe. But Gaarder's text avoids whimsy – we need it included, read by a British actor, in a second CD version – while Kraggerud's music, divided into four six-movement concertos for the times of day, is endlessly resourceful and surprising.

Key characteristics are sometimes exploited, sometimes not: E major star-gazing in Santa Barbara lives up to its 18th-century definition as 'the highest to which beautiful nature climbs', but his treatment of F sharp major is unexpected.

Sometimes places are evoked: A flat major's melody glides below pizzicato pentatonics, evoking the wonder of the Hangzhou Palace, an essential pairing with B flat minor's Kyoto, one of two laments for beauties of civilisation lost (horribly timely, of course). The Arctic Philharmonic strings of Tromsø are as evocative as their leader – Norway now has a great school of string-teaching – and while there's nothing radical here, the music is also never background and the variety, from meditation to lopsided dance, is extraordinary. I can't wait to hear the whole thing in action. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

RECORDING

★★★★★



POULENC

Piano Concerto; Concerto for two pianos in D minor*; Aubade; Sonata for piano four hands*; Élégie*; L'embarquement pour Cythère*
 Louis Lortie, *Hélène Mercier (piano); BBC Philharmonic/Edward Gardner
 Chandos CHAN10875 72:44 mins

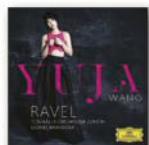
This delightful yet stylistically rather haphazard programme may confirm the prejudice of those who think Poulenc is little more than a hotchpotch of various influences. Yet even when this is fully exemplified in his Concerto for Two Pianos (1932) – which encompasses music hall, Javanese gamelan and Mozart – Poulenc somehow melds these disparate sources into his own distinctive style. Louis Lortie and Hélène Mercier perform it with great panache, also capturing the work's more reflective qualities, with Edward Gardner and the BBC Philharmonic providing by turns zestful and sensitive accompaniment.

Lortie is just as characterful in the Piano Concerto (1949), which Poulenc himself performed on tour in the States aged 50. However Gardner, by encouraging the use of string portamento even in the first movement's quasi-liturgical episode, has the violins seductively swoop as they allude to Poulenc's *Litanies à la Vierge Noire* – effectively reclothing Poulenc's demure nuns in sexy lingerie: though a palpable mischaracterisation, this may still offer a guilty pleasure to even Poulenc purists.

Poulenc's more acerbic side appears in his early Sonata for piano duet (1918, shades of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*), and even more pointedly in *Aubade* (1929), a parable told in pugnacious music for piano and 18 instruments about the goddess Diana, thwarted in love and fated to resume hunting – 'carrying the bow that was as tedious to her as my piano was at that time to me' Poulenc confessed. Most affecting, though, is his meltingly seductive *Élégie* for two pianos, written in 1959. The smooth alternation of chords between the two players, and their touchingly tacit treatment of the splintered harmonies with which it ends testify to Lortie and Mercier's remarkable rapport, having been duet partners since their teens. *Daniel Jaffé*

PERFORMANCE
 RECORDING

★★★★
 ★★★★



RAVEL

Piano Concerto in G;
 Concerto for the Left Hand in D

FAURÉ

Ballade in F sharp (original version)
 Yuja Wang (piano); Tonhalle-Orchester
 Zürich/Lionel Bringuier
 DG 479 4954 50:15 mins

This is the opening volume of Lionel Bringuier's projected Ravel series. Having long admired his conducting, as well as Yuja Wang's superlative technique and musicianship, I had keenly looked forward to hearing their collaboration on this album. Bringuier and Wang have happily worked together for some years, and indeed Wang has been artist in residence with the Tonhalle-Orchester at Bringuier's invitation. Furthermore, Wang has previously made an astonishing recording of the piano transcription of *La valse*. Yet she seems not entirely at ease with the G major Concerto: contrary to the limpid character of its lyrical moments, her playing has a rather restless quality, even in the first movement's affectionate references to Gershwin's Broadway style, and its slow movement's allusion to Mozart.

Wang plays the original piano solo version of Fauré's *Ballade* rather than the usual concertante rewrite, which Fauré created after Liszt had declared the solo version unplayable. That original version is far more involving, and Wang avoids making it the usual mellow wail: this is music with considerable backbone, all the more impressive for the clarity of her playing. Still, Wang could have been a little less inexorable in charging through the charming 'woodland' section with its bird-like trills.

Wang's superb technique and keyed-up style of playing might well have suited Ravel's Left Hand Concerto. It seems, though, that Bringuier and Wang decided to avoid its opening the usual sense of tragic grandeur: Wang, in more than one sense, makes light of her opening cadenza, and the following orchestral tutti is amiable rather than heroic. The recorded acoustic – much of it sounding as if heard some distance from the orchestra in an empty hall, so obscuring some of the finer detail of Bringuier's interpretations – only adds to a general feeling of disappointment. *Daniel Jaffé*

PERFORMANCE
 RECORDING

★★★★
 ★★★★

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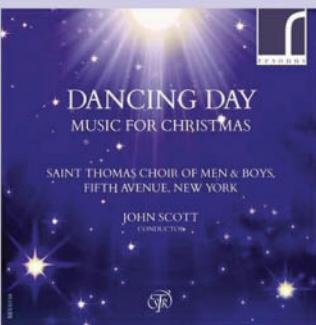


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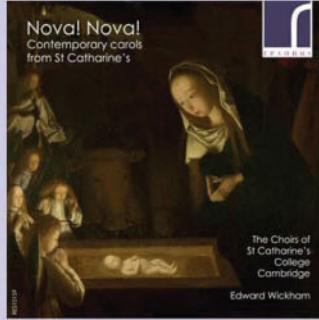
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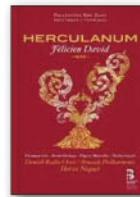
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OPERA

Hervé Niquet directs spectacular disaster in David's *Herculanum*; *Jennifer Larmore* is a beguiling in a new DVD of Offenbach's *Belle Hélène*; plus *Jonas Kaufmann* brings new insights to Puccini heroes



DAVID

Herculanum

Véronique Gens, Karine Deshayes, Nicolas Courjal; Flemish Radio Choir; Brussels Philharmonic/Hervé Niquet
Ediciones Singulares ES1020
121:64 mins (2 discs)

The Paris Opéra was an exciting place to be on the night of 4 March 1859, as the stage filled with flashes of lightning, crumbling pillars and possibly even surges of simulated pyroclastic flow: Vesuvius was repeating its explosion of 79 AD as Félicien David's four-act opera *Herculanum* reached its terrible climax. Berlioz found the orchestration a touch dull, with instruments generally operating in the middle of their registers, but that tells us a lot about Berlioz. I was glad to find David responding effectively to the various dramatic incidents before the final conflagration with a musical palette that owes nothing to the exotic style he had embraced in his smash hit *Le Désert* five years earlier. In the meantime he and the rest of Paris had had the opportunity of hearing the Opéra production of Verdi's *Sicilian Vespers*, and David had obviously liked what he heard. We would listen in vain for anything approaching Berlioz's or Verdi's individuality, but the music is competently written and the soloists, especially Nicolas Courjal doubling as two baddie baritones, do a splendid job of bringing out the dramatic interplay between them.

The booklet, finely produced, contains interesting and well-researched articles. I would have welcomed something on the version recorded here, since three of the arias approvingly mentioned by Berlioz are not found on the disc. *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BBC MUSIC OPERA CHOICE

Hair-raising Tchaikovsky

David Nice relishes Mariss Jansons's live recording of *Pique Dame*



HAPLESS HEROINE:
Tatiana Serjan as Lisa is
tremulous yet superb



TCHAIKOVSKY

Pique Dame

Misha Didyk, Tatiana Serjan, Larissa Diadkova, Alexey Shishlyakov, Alexey Markov; Choir and Children's Choir of Bavarian State Opera; Bavarian State Radio Orchestra/Mariss Jansons
BR Klassik 900129 168:03 mins (3 discs)

Mariss Jansons's more recent CDs have been live re-recordings of his standard symphonic repertoire, so this live semi-staged performance of a toweringly great opera, by head and shoulders the best stereo version now available, is cause for celebration. The polar opposite of the fleet 1952 Bolshoi version starring the great Georgi Nelepp (available

from Brilliant Classics in a very cheap 60-CD Tchaikovsky box), it wouldn't have displaced it as the *Building a Library* choice I made on Radio 3 two years ago, but in terms of state-of-the-art sound, it's peerless.

The Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra is sleek, shapely and vivid throughout, but Tchaikovsky's

Tchaikovsky's spooky writing for woodwind is placed to the fore

pioneering contribution in what Janáček called his 'masterpiece of horror' is his spooky writing for woodwind, and since this team is placed helpfully to the fore, that's one crowning glory here. The other is the obsessed outsider hero Herman as played and sung with increasing intensity by Misha Didyk. His

unfortunate victim Lisa, Tatiana Serjan, can be tremulous and even harsh in the upper register under pressure, but their final meeting has a vividness that should make your hair stand on end. Both baritones – one older and cynical, the other dapper and fierce – are superb, and if the chorus never sounds quite Russian, it's sophisticated enough to meet all Jansons's demands. Sadly the recording is missing a little sarabande in the Act II intermezzo, but that shouldn't stop you hearing one of the most exciting and polished opera recordings of recent years.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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GLUCK

Orfeo ed Euridice

Franco Fagioli, Malin Hartelius, Emmanuelle de Negri; Accentus; Insula Orchestra/Laurence Equilbey
Archiv479 5315 151:58 mins (3 discs)

Like few other works of genius in the operatic repertory, *Orfeo ed Euridice*

places the burden of any revival squarely on its leading performer. What Gluck sought in his 'Reform' operas, of which this was the first, was 'a beautiful simplicity' of sound and substance – exemplified in his depiction of Orpheus, a protagonist permanently in the spotlight. Only when the rare singer-actor is cast capable of tackling the role with tonal strength, verbal sensitivity and dramatic intensity do Gluck's words make full, powerful sense.

Hence my disappointment with this latest recording of the opera's original (1762) version. Its Orfeo, Argentinian Franco Fagioli, lacks to my ears those essential Gluckian qualities listed above. His remarkable voice can reach high above the stave like few others in his category, with special facility in ornate vocal writing, demonstrated on the set's third CD offering samples from later *Orfeo* versions. Yet after a while the fruity tone quality proves unvaried, the word-utterance superficial, at times blurry. For once the great set-pieces come across as emotionally distanced, even dull.

There's a less limited interpretative response from the rest of the company, notably the chorus, and Malin Hartelius's Euridice, though tending to shrillness, is moving. But compared with previous 1762 sets conducted by John Eliot Gardiner, with Derek Lee Ragin, and René Jacobs, with Bernarda Fink, this one seems fatally bland. *Max Loppert*

PERFORMANCE ★★

RECORDING ★★★★

BACKGROUND TO...



Jacques Offenbach
(1819-80)

Born in Cologne to a Jewish family, the son of the local synagogue's cantor, Offenbach

studied at the Paris Conservatoire. He began his career as a cellist before composing his first one-act operetta, *l'Alcôve*, in 1847. The success of his first full-length operetta, *Orphée aux enfers* (Orpheus in the Underworld), composed in 1858, persuaded him to devote himself entirely to composition. *Orphée*'s librettist was the politically savvy Ludovic Halévy, with whom Offenbach collaborated again on *La belle Hélène*, a satire on the court of Napoleon III composed in 1864.



HANDEL

The Power of Love: operatic arias

Amanda Forsythe (soprano); Apollo's Fire Baroque Orchestra/Jeannette Sorrell Avie AV2350 69:20 mins

This is Amanda Forsythe's first and long overdue solo recording of Baroque music. A seasoned vocalist often overshadowed by bigger stars, Forsythe shows here why she deserves top rank. Her agility, her invention and her voice – a straight core sound wrapped in luminous timbres – are remarkable. Her programme alternates familiar with unfamiliar Handel arias, all fine showcases for her strengths. Particularly in *allegro* moods, Forsythe sets arias on fire; her handling of war-horses like 'Da tempeste' (*Giulio Cesare*) will amaze even the jaded connoisseur. She acquires herself equally well in arias from *Terpsichore* and *Teseo*, adding zest to these more obscure numbers with her sparkling additions.

While her sound is always gorgeous, there's a lack of interiority. This is most noticeable in arias of pathos, where one misses any sort of dialogue between vocalist and band. A whiff of artifice clings to 'Geloso tormento' (*Almira*) partly because director Jeannette Sorrell has the band repeat without variation its response to the words Forsythe sings. Generally, the band's performance is rococo rather than Baroque: delicate and nuanced, but pale, with continuo realisations that hide behind the singer rather than engaging with her. Yet Forsythe's stunning execution makes this a disc worth having. *Berta Juncos*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★

RECORDING ★★★★



OFFENBACH

DVD La belle Hélène

Jennifer Larmore, Jun-Sang Han, Peter Galliard, Viktor Rud; Hamburg State Opera Choir; Hamburg Philharmonic/Gerrit Priessnitz; dir Renaud Doucet & André Barbe (Hamburg, 2014) C Major DVD: 730908; Blu-ray: 731004; 117 mins

A cruise ship, the *Jupiter*, is moored; a young man with a head of golden

curls catches an apple; a woman passenger collapses and is stretchered up the gangplank. She is Hélène, he is Paris and the *Jupiter* a version of television's *The Love Boat*. In Renaud Doucet and André Barbe's production for the Hamburg Staatsoper, Offenbach's *La belle Hélène* takes a trip back to the 1960s. You can almost smell the patchouli oil and feel the crushed velvet. Is Hélène and Paris's story perhaps a dream conjured out of a giant spliff, the dream of love that Hélène asks from Calchas, the High Priest?

Be that as it may, the flower power costumes in shrieking primary colours, a troupe of sexually ambivalent dancers and the general air of polymorphous perversity that seems to grip the entire passenger list rather blunts the edge of Offenbach and his librettists' critique of 19th-century sexual hypocrisy. Menelaus is the kind of overweight German who according to the English gets his towel on the beach at first light; Agamemnon struts about in gold lamé jogging pants; Orestes is a version of the singer Tiny Tim; and his vengeful sister Elektra prowls the deck with an axe in her hand.

Jennifer Larmore is a handsome Hélène who offers Paris and indeed anyone with eyes to see the promise of pneumatic bliss. Her singing is careful and characterful until a last act cadenza, which comes from and goes to nowhere. It was a brave decision to cast Jun-Sang Han as Paris. Handsome to look at and funny too, he never quite gets the vocal measure of the role. It's lyric, not dramatic. Good things happen in the pit but if you want a genuinely belle Hélène, then it has to be Marc Minkowski and Laurent Pelly's DVD with Felicity Lott. *Christopher Cook*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★

PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★

BLU-RAY ★★★★

DVD ★★★★



PUCCINI

Nessun Dorma: arias from Manon Lescaut, Tosca, Turandot etc

Jonas Kaufmann (tenor), Kristine Opolais (soprano), Massimo Simeoli (baritone), Antonio Pirozzi (bass); Orchestra e coro dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia/Antonio Pappano Sony 88875092482 60:43 mins (plus DVD 7:32 mins)

If you want a Puccini tenor bulging with Italian vocal muscle, or a voice

with top notes that ping off his dress studs, then Jonas Kaufmann is not your man. But for an artist working with a conductor who makes you rethink Puccini's heroes as deeply flawed individuals, then this is the album. Kaufmann is not a natural Puccini tenor; but listen to his Des Grieux overwhelmed by Manon Lescaut, or Dick Johnson in 'Una parola sola!', and your doubts disappear. Kaufmann and Antonio Pappano relish the lushness of *Manon*, and those nuggets of melody with which the composer colours the score of *La fanciulla del West*. Then there's Luigi's bleak view of human existence in 'Hai ben ragione' from *Il tabarro*, which puts the opera firmly where it belongs into the 20th century. Kaufmann's diction is peerless: you listen to every sweat-soaked word too.

There's the Kaufmann croon with its hints of the matinée idol in the aria from *Le Villi*, and the voice is now as much dark chocolate as light caramel; but for intelligence and commitment, is there another tenor nowadays who can hold a candle to Kaufmann's thoughtful Calaf, repentant Pinkerton and damned Des Grieux? And for once the bonus DVD is just that with Nina Stemme singing Minnie to his Dick Johnson. *Christopher Cook*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

★★★★
★★★★

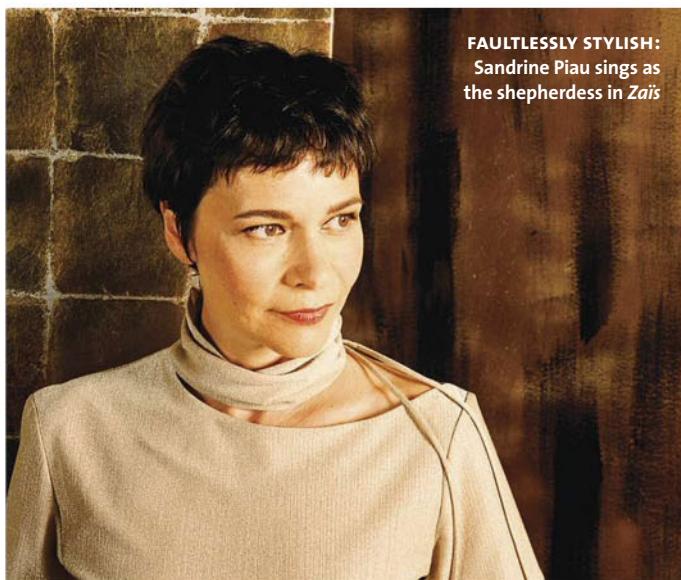


RAMEAU

Zaïs

Julian Pergaud, Sandrine Piau, Aimery Lefèvre, Benoît Arnould, Amel Brahimi-Djelloul, Hasnaa Bennani; Chœur de chambre de Namur; Les Talens Lyriques/Christophe Rousset Aparté AP109 158 mins 3 discs)

Scored for 'tambour voié' (muffled drum) and bitter, brusque strings, the overture to *Zaïs* depicts Chaos and the Elements, and is as arresting as the opening of Ravel's *Les éléments*. So why is it not as well known? Rameau's 1748 *ballet héroïque* is a bizarre work, tinted in exotic colours and decorated with an abundance of pretty dances. At its heart is a series of cruel supernatural deceptions by which the title character, an immortal, tests the love of the faithful shepherdess Zélide. Christophe Rousset's recording is distinguished by a dazzling variety of articulation, dynamics and timbres, which glosses the weakness of the libretto. The playing of Les Talens



FAULTLESSLY STYLISH:
Sandrine Piau sings as
the shepherdess in *Zaïs*

Lyriques is supple and characterful but stock French Baroque effects (thunder and trilling birds) pop up with unusual frequency in this score, losing potency with each repetition.

The Prologue is charmingly sung by sopranos Amel Brahim-Djelloul (*Une Sylphide*) and Hasnaa Bennani (*Amour*), baritone Aimery Lefèvre (*Oromazès*) and the Chœur de chambre de Namur. Delicious dances aside, the remainder of the work is carried by Julian Prégardien (*Zaïs*), Sandrine Piau (*Zélidie*) and Benoît Arnould (*Cindor*). From the delicacy of 'Ce que je vois m'offre sans cesse' in Act I to the utter desolation of 'Coulez mes pleurs' in Act III and the ecstatic beauty of 'Pour les coeurs tendres et constants', Piau is faultlessly expressive and stylish. Arnould animates Cindor's scheming recitatives brilliantly, but Prégardien lacks charisma in the role of *Zaïs*.

Anna Picard

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



RAVEL

L'enfant et les sortilèges;
Ma mère l'Oye

Hélène Hébrard, Delphine Galou, Julie Pasturaud, Jean-Paul Fouchécourt, Marc Barrard, Nicolas Courjal, Ingrid Perruche, Annick Massis; Chœur Britten, Jeune Chœur Symphonique; Maîtrise de l'Opéra National de Lyon; Orchestre National de Lyon/Leonard Slatkin Naxos 8.660336 71:37 mins

Few would dispute Leonard Slatkin's claim that the extra minutes of

music added by Ravel to transform the original piano duet suite into the ballet version of *Ma mère l'Oye* 'are sheer magic'. Not only are they beautiful in themselves, they link the five pre-existing pieces with absolute naturalness so that, as in the case of Ernie Wise, you can't detect the joins. This is a loving performance with everything in its place.

The same cannot quite be said of this performance of *L'enfant et les sortilèges*. It's a very tricky work to bring off, and here voices and orchestra are not always absolutely together, most notably on the Child's final 'Maman' where the strings lag. This is a crucial moment, where the descending fourth, the motto interval of the whole opera, must act as a final seal on the work. The faulty ensemble here is especially unfortunate as the Child's earlier 'Maman', which excites the animals' fury, is sung almost to a descending major third.

The all-French cast articulate the text splendidly, with tenor Jean-Paul Fouchécourt doing his usual superb number (or numbers) as L'Arithmétique. Mezzo Hélène Hébrard as the Child sounds suitably young and fresh, soprano Annick Massis as the Fire negotiates her high coloratura with accuracy and élan, and my only vocal regret is that baritone Marc Barrard ignores the Grandfather Clock's sudden, plaintive *piano dolce* ('quiet and sweetly') on 'Moi, moi qui sonnais'. A final black mark to whoever engineered the sudden loss of atmosphere between the two scenes, ruining another moment of sheer magic. Roger Nichols

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



TCHAIKOVSKY

Iołanta

Olesya Golovneva, Alexander Vinogradov, Andrei Bondarenko, Dmytro Popov, Vladislav Sulimsky, John Heuzenroeder, Marc-Olivier Oetterli, Dalia Schaechter, Justyna Samborska, Marta Wryk; Chor der Oper Köln, Gürzenich-Orchester Köln/Dmitrij Kitaenko Oehms OC 963 107:30 mins (2 discs)

This latest, Cologne-based and mostly Russian-cast, recording of Tchaikovsky's far from neglected last opera is better than Anna Netrebko's recent recording, but doesn't attain the ideal of Valery Gergiev's 1994 Kirov Opera classic. Acclaim for Dmitrij Kitaenko's Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky baffles me: he lacks the suppleness that would lend enchantment to this glowing if odd fable of the blind girl led to see the world. A crucial inflexibility with his singers is soon apparent in Iołanta's arioso – *tempo molto rubato*, Tchaikovsky asks, but the conductor doesn't let Olesya Golovneva's heroine take wing.

Golovneva in any case lacks the luminous soprano pathos essential for the vulnerable princess, but she does have intensity, which presumably made her a good Natasha in Cologne Opera's *War and Peace*. The ideal combination of golden voice and dramatic conviction belongs to tenor Dmytro Popov's Vaudemont, which means that the crucial duet in which the hero discovers that his love can't see is the heart of the opera, as it should be. The top B flat in his preceding romance isn't quite as thrilling as Géorgie Grigorian's for Gergiev, but it's part of a phrase conducted, like so many others, in one long breath.

The lower male voices are all distinguished – chiefly those of bass Alexander Vinogradov and baritone Andrey Bondarenko – but their lack of nuance combines with sound that's way too close. At least we hear most of the detail in the orchestra, especially Tchaikovsky's amazing woodwind scoring. What a great score this is, and at least – unlike the Netrebko turkey – it's done with live conviction. Presentation is plain, lacks a libretto and gives two different names for one of the bit-part singers. David Nice

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

REISSUES

Reviewed by Christopher Cook

GOUNOD

Faust (highlights)

Corelli, Ghiaurov, Sutherland, Massard; Ambrósian Opera Chorus; LSO/Bonyng Eloquence 482 2566 (1966) 59:53 mins

An amazing cast that never quite gels. Corelli's ringing top is present but there's trouble below. Sutherland glitters and droops when she should tug at our hearts.

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

DONIZETTI • ROSSINI • VERDI

Arias from Falstaff, The Barber of Seville, The Thieving Magpie, L'elisir d'amore and Don Pasquale

Fernando Corena (bass); various orchestras/Erede, Downes Eloquence 482 0268 (1952-63) 76:43 mins

The combination of Fernando Corena, the basso buffo of choice 50 years ago, with Edward Downes for *Falstaff* makes this a must. Otherwise Corena is an almost sympathetic Dr Bartolo and a rollicking Dulcamara.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

SULLIVAN

The Gondoliers

D'Oyly Carte Opera Company; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Royston Nash Eloquence 482 0660 (1977) 125:23 mins (2 discs)

John Reed is a high camp Duke of Plaza-Toro, Jane Metcalfe's Tessa is perhaps a long in the vocal tooth, but there are sparkling eyes in the pit with Royston Nash.

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

SULLIVAN

*The Pirates of Penzance; Cox and Box**

D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, New Symphony Orchestra of London / Isidore Godfrey; RPO/Royston Nash Eloquence 480 7059 (1958/78) 122:14 mins (2 discs)

D'Oyly Carte recorded better versions of *Pirates* in the 1960s and '70s. Ann Drummmond-

Grant's fruity Ruth and Jean Hindmarsh's soubrette Mabel shine in a lacklustre cast. *Cox and Box* has more wit.

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

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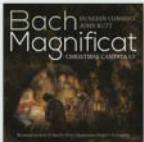
CHORAL & SONG

Alamire explores the riches found in *Anne Boleyn's Songbook*; the *Tallis Scholars* are on radiant form singing Taverner's *Missa Corona spinea*; and the premiere of Arvo Pärt's *Adam's Passion* in the Tallinn Foundry is captured on DVD and explored in a fascinating full-length documentary

BBC MUSIC CHORAL & SONG CHOICE

Christmas from Leipzig

Paul Riley gets in the festive spirit with the Dunedin Consort's Bach



JS BACH • GABRIELI

Bach: Magnificat; Cantata Christen, ätzet diesen Tag, BWV 63; Organ preludes; Gabrieli: Hodie Christus natus est
Dunedin Consort/John Butt
Linn CKD 469 (hybrid CD/SACD)
78:07 mins

Having already recorded Bach's *St John Passion* in the revelatory context of a Lutheran Good Friday Vespers service, John Butt and his Dunedin Consort now turn their reconstructive gaze on Bach's first Christmas in Leipzig, in 1723. He offers a similarly absorbing liturgical framework for the musical stars of the Christmas Day Vespers: Cantata *Christen, ätzet diesen Tag*, BWV 63

This is a beautifully paced, exhilaratingly executed performance

and the elaborate Magnificat in its E flat incarnation complete with the four seasonal interpolations favoured in Leipzig. Organ preludes, congregational hymn singing, collects and blessing all work their enriching spell, but the experience isn't quite as immersive as it was in the *St John Passion* because the constraints of disc length mean that some tracks have to be accessed as free downloads. Unavoidable, but disruptive – though as a Christmas present the Dunedins spare us the downloadable sermon, the centrepiece of the service.



COMPELLING VISION:
John Butt directs his
Dunedin Consort

What remains on disc, however, is undeniably compelling. An eight-part Gabrieli motet underlines the important role Italian music played in the life of the German church; flamboyantly improvised organ curlicues punctuate the congregational chorales; while the organ preluding engineers an undeniable theatricality – especially when Butt's magisterial account of the Magnificat fugue yields without pause to the quivering, ecstatic joy of BWV 243a's opening chorus, a *coup de théâtre* rehearsed in the *John Passion* recording. What follows is

a holistically conceived, beautifully paced, exhilaratingly executed performance that never allows the interpolated *laudes* to sound like cuckoos in the nest. The *Virga Jesse* is a delight, incidentally, and makes up for some uneasy compositional jolts in the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



ON THE WEBSITE

Hear extracts from this recording and the rest of this month's choices on the [BBC Music Magazine website](http://www.classical-music.com)
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BIBER

Fanfara; Plaudite tympana;
Battalia; Sonata Sancti Polycarpi;
Missa Salisburgensis
Hespérion XXI, Le Concert des Nations,
La Capella Reial de Catalunya/
Jordi Savall
Alia Vox AVSA 9912 (hybrid CD/SACD)
71:40 mins

This is Biber in gargantuan mode. A fanfare by Bartholomäus Riedl for merely ten trumpets and timpani introduces the motet *Plaudite tympana* for 54 performers: two eight-voice choirs, ensembles of strings, woodwind, cornets and trombones, strings, trumpets and timpani (two groups) and continuo. The structure and harmony is shaped by the limited notes available on natural trumpets and timpani, but when their repetitive dialogues are silent, glorious vocal and instrumental colours and counterpoints appear.

Similar brass limitations arise in the Sonata *Sancti Polycarpi*, but this is off-set by the dialogues across the huge spaces of the 11th-century chapel of Cordona Castle.

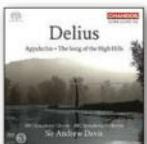
The Mass, like the motet in 54 parts and originally intended for Salzburg Cathedral in 1682, is a *tour de force* both as a composition and in this performance. It's superbly recorded. Groups ranging from solo voices with a pair of recorders to the full ensemble complete with brass and drums are thrown across the huge spaces of the chapel with palpable excitement and thrilling effect. The reverberation lasts over five seconds, yet every detail in the small-scale passages is crystal clear, and the sheer weight of the full forces is shattering. Even in simple stereo, the effect is magnificent, but it's all the better if you enjoy the added aural dimensions of SACD.

Biber's *Battalia* (reissued from 2002) is completely bizarre, including drunken soldiers singing

eight unrelated songs simultaneously, although fortunately for only 47 seconds. *George Pratt*

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★



BLISS

Morning Heroes; Hymn to Apollo

Samuel West (orator); BBC Symphony Chorus; BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Andrew Davis

Chandos CHSA 5159 (hybrid CD/SACD) 65:12 mins

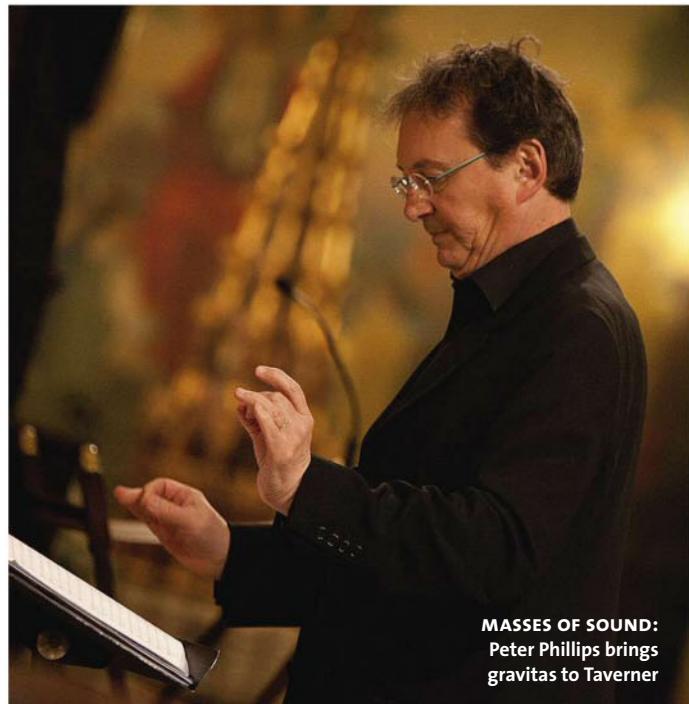
Sir Arthur Bliss was wounded in the First World War, and his beloved brother Kennard was killed. *Morning Heroes*, premiered in 1930, was his long-delayed war requiem. It portrays departure for war, preparations for battle, periods of waiting, the heroism of combat, its deadly outcome and the glorious memory of fallen comrades, in texts drawn from Homer's *Iliad*, Li Tai Po, Walt Whitman and the war poets Wilfred Owen and Robert Nichols, set for orator and chorus. The score conveys elevated grief and soldierly courage in distinctly personal tones, with rich orchestral colouring; but its most telling passage comes when the orator speaks Owen's stark 'Spring Offensive' against a spare background of menacing drums alternating with silence.

Sir Andrew Davis's performance with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus surpasses Sir Charles Groves's fine 1974 EMI Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra account with urgent tempos, choral singing of full tone and incisive attack, eloquent orchestral playing, and an excellent, open recording (with a surround-sound option) which clearly places Samuel West's moving orator in the acoustic of the Fairfield Halls, Croydon alongside his colleagues.

The coupling is Bliss's orchestral *Hymn to Apollo* of 1926, in its original, rawer version. The piece is appropriate not just because it picks up the cantata's closing vision, in Nichols's 'Dawn on the Somme', of 'companies of morning heroes' streaming towards Apollo the sun god, but also, as Andrew Burn's authoritative note explains, because it's addressed to Apollo as the god of healing, and so formed a part of Bliss's long and fruitful process of recovery. *Anthony Burton*

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★



MASSES OF SOUND:
Peter Phillips brings gravitas to Taverner



KARPMAN

Ask Your Mama

LANGSTON HUGHES

Ask Your Mama (poetry)

Janai Brugger, Angela Brown (soprano); Nnenna Freelon (vocals); The Roots; Medusa; San Francisco Ballet Orchestra/ George Manahan Avie AV 2346 100:34 mins (2 discs)

This richly immersive setting of Harlem poet Langston Hughes's *Ask Your Mama* (1961) is more or less uncategorisable: free jazz, gospel, broadway, art song, soul and hip hop are all woven into its shifting, urban tapestry. Described as 'an attempt to squeeze an entire country into a single piece of music', it conjures a teeming, kaleidoscopic Ivesian mash-up, had Charles Ives been an African-American.

Hughes's epic poem of racial oppression was subtitled '12 Moods for Jazz' and dedicated to Louis Armstrong. In the margins he indicated particular songs – like *When the Saints Go Marchin' In*, *Dixie* or *The Hesitation Blues* – and musical sounds, such as heavy drums or 'lonely flute'. Composer and producer Laura Karpman takes his cues and weaves in German Lieder (*Gretchen am Spinnrade* sung by Jessye Norman), samples of Leontyne Price and Marianne Anderson and

Gabrieli-like antiphonal brass, which melts into Blues in a thoroughly 21st-century remix. Hughes, the inventor of 'jazz poetry', knew how spoken language could be its own music, and his own reading lends a potent resonance.

The cycle features a multitude of voices, including luminous soprano Janai Brugger (winner of Domingo's 2012 Operalia), jazz vocalist Nnenna Freelon and the powerfully incisive Monet Owens, accompanied by the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra under George Manahan. Musically, inevitably, it's a mixed bag. As a piece of sonic theatre, its message hits home: 'Oppression by any other name is just about the same, casts a long shadow, adds a dash of bitters to each song, makes of almost every answer a question, and of men of every race or religion questioners.' *Helen Wallace*

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

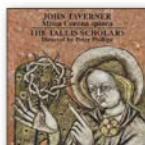
★★★★★
★★★★★

by Tallis by now, though it is unclear whether they are going to compete with Alistair Dixon and the Chapelle du Roi who issued a box-set of his complete works in 2011 on Brilliant Classics. What we have here are some of Tallis's earliest pieces in Latin, mixed with service music from the reformed English liturgy – works that reflect the traumatic upheavals and reversals of church life in England in the 16th century.

The fairly simple settings of the prayers, canticles and psalms are daily meat and drink to Andrew Carwood who is director of music at St Paul's Cathedral in London. Naturally, the execution and control is eminently professional, though some of the extremely long lines of text in *E'en like the hunted hind* (Psalm 42) occasionally seem to surprise the ensemble, and in the Te Deum the singing slightly bulldozes across the complex punctuation of the text. The jewel in this collection is the glorious *Ave, Dei patris filia*, with missing parts newly reconstructed by David Allinson. Its successive verses employ different combinations of voices, and the whole gives a clear indication of just how good Tallis (and this ensemble) can be. One of the better-known works on the disc is *Christ rising*: they sing it at a lower pitch than the Chapelle du Roi/Dixon performance and this seems to drain energy from the music. In general, however, a commendable recording both musicality and acoustically.

Anthony Pryer
PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★



TAVERNER

Missa Corona spinea; Dum transisset Sabbatum I & II

The Tallis Scholars/Peter Phillips Gimell CDGIM 046 62:07 mins

John Taverner's *Missa Corona spinea* is one of the high points of English sacred music: a seraphic, festal Mass, probably written for Thomas Wolsey's newly founded Cardinal College, Oxford. Stratospheric and florid treble lines (a characteristic of Tudor polyphony) soar over an imperturbable cantus firmus to create a truly ethereal sound. Taverner paints vivid sonorities with his rich, six-voice scoring, offsetting timbres, reaching into the extremes of vocal tessitura, splitting and omitting voices: listen to the



TALLIS

Ave, Dei patris filia; Honor, virtus et Potestas; Candidi facti sunt; Homo quidam fecit cenam magnam; Christ rising again; Litany; The Lord be with you; Te Deum, etc

The Cardinall's Musick/Andrew Carwood Hyperion CDA 68095 71:58 mins The Cardinall's Musick must have produced half a dozen discs of music

Benedictus and the second Agnus Dei to hear these effects at their most haunting and other worldly.

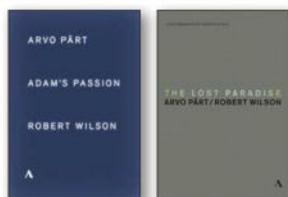
The Mass requires singers of the highest calibre and the Scholars rise magnificently to the challenge – both literally and figuratively speaking. The sopranos sing with razor-sharp precision, producing a remarkably boyish sound – aptly so, since the work was written for a male choir – while the lower voices are fluid and sure. Ensemble is balanced and textures are sheer, even in the most sumptuous polyphony.

There is another fine version of this work by The Sixteen under Harry Christophers, recorded in 1989 and now available at budget price on Helios. By comparison, The Tallis Scholars produce a brighter sound that better evokes the brilliance of boys' voices – a quality enhanced by the detailed and vibrant recording. Under Peter Phillips's expansive direction, the Mass unfolds at a slower pace, heightening its sense of gravitas, yet the phrasing is sinuous and buoyant throughout. The Sixteen's account remains a classic but it is hard to imagine a more radiant and uplifting performance than this new one.

Kate Bolton-Porciatti

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★★
★★★★★



PÄRT

DVD Adam's Passion

Tallinn Chamber Orchestra; Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir; Tõnu Kaljuste; dir. Robert Wilson (Estonia, 2015) Accentus ACC 20333 94:08 mins

THE LOST PARADISE: Arvo Pärt/Robert Wilson

DVD A documentary by Günter Atteln

Accentus ACC 20321 55:33 mins

Adam's Passion is a theatrical event devised by Robert Wilson, structured around a number of Pärt's pre-existing pieces – *Adam's Lament* (2009), *Tabula Rasa* (1977) and *Miserere* (1989/92) – although *Sequentia* (2014), which opens the work, was receiving its world premiere here. And as Tõnu Kaljuste says in *The Lost Paradise*, a film documenting the staging, if you did not know otherwise you would readily believe that the *Passion* was a

complete self-contained work. Staged in the Tallinn Foundry, Estonia, the orchestra was above and behind the audience, itself bisected by a narrow stage that evokes the Cross and down which a naked Adam progresses.

Wilson is probably best known for his collaborations with Philip Glass, including *Monsters of Grace* and *Einstein on the Beach*. His sparse, ritualistic design and production, with actions in extreme slow motion – done for real, not with camera effects – is strange and bemusing, Pärt's music is beautiful and moving. The two combine to create an utterly mesmerising and enriching experience. The film direction, camerawork and editing are suitably un-gimmicky, allowing the stage production to come across clear and unobscured. Cuts and close-ups are, quite properly, used only to clarify.

The Lost Paradise includes rehearsal footage and interviews with Pärt's colleagues and admirers, including Sofia Gubaidulina, Gidon Kremer and Paul Hillier as well as a chronicle of his visits to Tokyo to receive the Praemium Imperiale award and to the Vatican to participate in a seminar, Women's Cultures. Most fascinating are the rare sequences where Pärt, always reluctant to put himself in front of the music, talks straight to camera, discussing among other things about the redemptive power of pain, which he defines as an absence of love.

Wilson says he always starts rehearsals without music, developing ideas fairly fully before bringing in the music, otherwise, 'I know, if I start with the music, invariably I will tend to illustrate.' The on-stage scenes are not necessarily attempts at interpretation either, but responses to the music. I have my own speculations about what the action and images might mean but there is a big, though not straightforward clue in the depiction of Adam, and the hints of a new Adam. And do I detect allusions to Doris Lessing's *Shikasta* cycle and even to *Hansel and Gretel*?

Mercifully, and unusually these days, director Günther Ateln's approach is cool, focused and un-tricksy, illuminating the subject without pointless and mannered stylistic distractions. Like the DVD of the premiere performance, *The Lost Paradise* is handsomely packaged in a cardboard book-style cover that contains photographs as well as background essays.

Barry Witherden

PERFORMANCE
(BOTH DVDS)
PICTURE & SOUND
(BOTH DVDS)

★★★★★
★★★★★



ANNE BOLEYN'S SONGBOOK

Music & Passions of a Tudor Queen: music by Brumel, Compère, Despres, Févin, Mouton, Sermisy and anon

Clare Wilkinson (mezzo), Jacob Heringman (lute), Kirsty Whatley (harp); Alamire/David Skinner Obsidian CD 715 94:29 mins (2 discs)

The manuscript known as *Anne Boleyn's Songbook* displays both the splendour and the intimacy of early 16th-century music from the European courts. Perhaps owned and used by Anne herself, this varied and eclectic collection leafs through English songs, French chansons, sumptuous Latin polyphony and delicate instrumental works.

Among many treasures are Brumel's fleeting but sublime *Sicut lilium*, the liquid and melodious love songs *Venes regrets* and *Jouysance vous donneray*, Josquin's darkly austere *Praeter rerum seriem* and his hauntingly beautiful *Stabat mater*, not to mention some fine yet unknown anonymous works. The music is tinged throughout with the hues of melancholy, and nowhere more so than in the concluding lute-song, *O Deathe rock me asleep* the chilling words of which may have been penned by Anne or one of the condemned men accused of being her lover, shortly before their execution.

Scholar and director David Skinner brings his expertise to both the editions and the performances here by his vocal consort Alamire. He never shies from expressive gestures and dynamic variations – effects heightened by the responsive acoustic of the Fitzalan Chapel in Arundel Castle.

Alamire's sound is robust and muscular, full-bodied rather than pristine. Mezzo-soprano Clare Wilkinson sings the solo songs with ingenuous simplicity, subtly inflecting the words with period pronunciation, while Jacob Heringman and Kirsty Whatley weave beguiling traceries on lute and harp. Unlike some recordings dedicated solely to Renaissance polyphony, this trove never grows monotonous and, even after an hour-and-a-half of music, one is left longing to hear more from this intriguing manuscript.

Kate Bolton-Porciatti

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

REISSUES

Reviewed by George Hall

MAHLER

Des Knaben Wunderhorn*; Rückert-Lieder Forrester, Rehfuss; Orchestra of the Vienna Festival/Prohaska*; RIAS-Sinfonie Orchester, Berlin/Fricsay Praga Digitals PRD 250 313 (1956, 1963) 71:54 mins

The distinguished Heinz Rehfuss shares Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with the great contralto Maureen Forrester, an exceptional performer of this repertoire, who also contributes the *Rückert-Lieder*.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

WOLF

Mörike Lieder Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (baritone), Sviatoslav Richter (piano) PentaTone PTC 5186 219 (1973) (hybrid CD/SACD) 53:35 mins

Recorded live in Innsbruck, this Wolf recital focuses on the 1888 settings of Mörike and captures the rewarding collaboration between Fischer-Dieskau and Sviatoslav Richter at its best.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

BUTTERWORTH • ELGAR • SOMERVELL

A Shropshire Lad • Twilight • Maud John Carol Case (baritone), Daphne Ibbott (piano) Heritage HTGCD 297 (1968-1974) 68:58 mins

A masterly interpreter of English song, John Carol Case is caught here late in his career, though in fine voice, with his important recording of Somervell's *Maud* cycle a highlight.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

SCHUBERT

Die schöne Müllerin; Winterreise Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (baritone), Gerald Moore (piano) Heritage HTGCD 288/9 (1951 & 1955) 89:23 mins (2 discs)

With the marvellous Moore at the piano, Fischer-Dieskau's earliest recordings of *Die schöne Müllerin* (1951) and *Winterreise* (1955) remain invaluable documents of his art, even if the sound is just so-so.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

CHAMBER

Pianists *Leon Fleisher* and *Katherine Jacobson* delight with Ravel and Brahms; brother-and-sister team *Sergey* and *Lusine Khachatryan* champion Armenian composers; plus cellist *Yo-Yo Ma* celebrates his 60th birthday with pianist *Kathryn Stott*

BBC MUSIC CHAMBER CHOICE

A fine finish to Polish project

John Allison applauds the Lutosławskis' Bacewicz quartet cycle



POLISH SOLIDARITY:
the Lutosławskis
champion Bacewicz



BACEWICZ

String Quartets Nos 2, 4 & 5
Lutosławski Quartet
Naxos 8.572807 78:14 mins

Hot on the heels of Volume 1, reviewed back in November, this second instalment of Grażyna Bacewicz's string quartets completes the project triumphantly. Those who already know the Lutosławskis' superlative performances in this music will need no further encouragement, but for those coming fresh to the cycle this is perhaps the place to start. String Quartet No. 4, with which the

disc opens, is with good reason one of Bacewicz's most frequently performed works and the players relish its every detail. You would hardly know that 1951 was a tough time for Polish composers, facing the narrowing doctrines of Socialist Realism; Bacewicz's integrity shines

The Lutosławskis give a powerful account of the Beethovenian Fifth

in this abstract work perfectly judged in its formal balance.

An equally important work of post-war quartet literature is the Fifth. The longest of her seven quartets, it is designed on a Beethovenian scale and its qualities are all met here in a powerful account, each player digging in

yet coming together with depth of tone and unanimity of purpose. For contrast, there is Quartet No. 2, high-spirited despite being composed in wartime Warsaw (it was premiered in 1943 in the artists' cafe also frequented by Lutosławski and Panufnik). Histories of modern Polish music have tended to make Lutosławski and Panufnik, along with Górecki and Penderecki in the next generation, the heroes; but thanks to recordings such as this, Bacewicz is finally taking her rightful place as their equal.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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Hear extracts from this recording and the rest of this month's choices on the **BBC Music Magazine website**
www.classical-music.com



DVOŘÁK • SCHULHOFF • SUK

Dvořák: String Quartet No. 13 in G;
Schulhoff: Five Pieces;
Suk: Meditation on the Old Czech
Chorale Saint Wenceslas
Signum Quartet
Capriccio C5257 47:78 mins

In this inspired programme we arrive at Dvořák's final quartet through the prism of Schulhoff's playful anatomisation of dance *Alla Czeca* and Suk's profound, patriotic *cri de cœur*. And the raw, fresh immediacy of the Signum Quartet's delivery transforms what could be interesting in theory into something singularly illuminating.

The links are fascinating: while Dvořák and Suk were famously close, Dvořák's admiration for Schulhoff as a piano prodigy is less widely known. Suk declared himself a man 'to whom all -isms have been alien', while for Schulhoff music 'is never philosophy'. The latter's witty essays in dance include a guttural 'Waltz' in 4/4 time and a sinister *sotto voce* 'Serenata', disturbed by wraith-like figures in 5/8. Intonation is gleamingly precise yet string timbres are aptly coarse. Dvořák's spirit leaps up in the driving *Alla Czeca*, then subsides in a sleazily urban *Tango Milonga*, followed by a hair-raising Tarantella.

An intensely expressive account of Suk's *Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale* makes an ideal still point before the mellifluous outpouring of Dvořák's Quartet. The Signums capture its volatile spirit, balancing line against the rapid textural figures with robust grace, and expertly pace the long, involved *Adagio*, which finds echoes in the Suk. The germ of Schulhoff's dances can be heard in a buoyant *Scherzo*, which here has just the right bitter tang, in contrast to the trio's floating serenity. *Helen Wallace*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



BRITTEN • SEABOURNE

Seabourne: *Pieta*;
Britten: *Elegy; Lachrymae*

Georg Hamann (viola),
Akari Komiya (piano)
Sheva Contemporary SH137 58:02 mins

Himself a skilled viola player, the young Britten delighted in Brahms's use of the instrument in chamber music. 'What a marvellous craze for the viola Brahms had!' he once declared, and adapted the Beethoven cello sonatas for the viola when just 16. Britten composed his *Elegy* for solo viola in 1930 while still at school and it was only following the composer's death that these sketches were edited into a complete, titled work. Georg Hamann nonetheless gives an intense and committed account, before offering a yet more nuanced performance of the 1950 *Lachrymae*, here accompanied by Akari Komiya.

Peter Seabourne's *Pieta* (2007) was partly inspired by the eponymous statues of Michelangelo and is a five-movement work for viola and piano. Seabourne's expressive and accessible score chimes well with Britten's lyrical works, and the rich tonal palette of Hamann's playing is beautifully showcased in the work's demanding viola line. Alas, a dry and ungenerous recording quality throughout fails to complement the depth and melancholy of this otherwise eloquent disc. *Kate Wakeling*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★



LEON FLEISHER

Four Hands: works by Bolcom, Brahms, Ravel and Schubert
Leon Fleisher, Katherine Jacobson (piano)
Sony 88875064162 61:49 mins

Here's an hour of almost unalloyed pleasure. We are used to hearing Brahms's *Liebeslieder-Walzer* sung chorally, and it's great to encounter them in the four-hand piano version which he published to cash in – in the nicest possible way – on this glorious work's popular success. He himself had the poetry printed above the piano parts because meaning was vital to their full appreciation, and these pianists convey that meaning with

great finesse. Here they present love in all its forms – longed-for, requited, lost, or unrequited – in a performance which crackles with drama. We can feel the narrator's misery as he sits in a dark pit of despair, and we sense the tremor in the branches, as the bird which represents the movements of his hopeful heart flies through.

The opening movements of Schubert's Fantasie in F minor may be ponderously slow and sombre, but the return of the first theme in major mode – and its run-up to the deep finality of the coda – is beautifully effected. *La valse*, arranged by Ravel's editor and friend Lucien Garban, emerges in splendidly atmospheric form, and Bolcom's *Rag* has loose-limbed grace. *Michael Church*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★



MY ARMENIA

Works by Khachaturian, Komitas, Bagdasarian, Mirzoyan and Babajanian

Sergey Khachaturyan (violin), Lusine Khachaturyan (piano)
Naïve V5414 79:39 mins

It is both inevitable and just that Komitas Vardapet (the title 'Vardapet' signifies a celibate priest) should top the bill in a programme of works commemorating the Armenian Genocide. Komitas was born Soghomon Soghomonian in a Turkish village in 1869, a time when there was no border between Armenia and its oppressor Turkey. He is not even mentioned in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, but Aram Khachaturian – whom most people regard as Armenia's leading composer – declared that it was Komitas, and not he, who laid the foundations for his country's classical tradition.

Komitas started by singing in church but went on to become an ethnomusicologist *avant la lettre*, and enjoyed brief celebrity in Berlin and Paris before getting caught up in the genocidal onslaught which destroyed his ability to compose and drove him terminally mad. This CD's clumsy liner notes gloss over this latter fact, and although its French and German translations of the Armenian essay are literate, its English translation seems to be by uncorrected Google.

Komitas's glory lay in his choral arrangements of folk songs, but is represented here by two arrangements for violin and piano and seven for piano solo: each has

a truthful simplicity and charm, suggesting voice and rudimentary accompaniment with bare octaves and skipping rhythms. The rest of this CD of works by 20th-century composers is unmemorable apart from three exhilarating pieces by Khachaturian (two in arrangements). The other pieces do at least reflect the excellence of Armenia's conservatoire culture, as do Sergey and Lusine Khachaturyan, despite the fact that much of their training has been in Germany. The pleasure of their musicianship is this CD's real selling point. *Michael Church*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★



SONGS FROM THE ARC OF LIFE

Works by Brahms, Debussy, Delius, Dvořák, Elgar, Fauré, Gade, Gershwin, Gounod, Grieg, Kreisler, Messiaen, Saint-Saëns etc

Yo-Yo Ma (cello), Kathryn Stott (piano)
Sony 8887503162 67:44 mins

This curious collection appears to be an exercise in unstrenuous nostalgia for Yo-Yo Ma's 60th. It's almost bound not to live up to its grand title, *Songs from the Arc of Life*, and the booklet notes are inane. The opening works – Bach's *Ave Maria*, Brahms's *Lullaby* and Dvořák's *Songs my mother taught me* – are peculiarly colourless; but then comes Debussy's manic *Papillons* and a delightfully fluent Gershwin Prelude, and the programme begins to take shape. The third theme from Sollima's *Il bell'Antonio* makes for a grindingly powerful centre-point, and both performers have fun with Grieg's tiny soap opera *The Wounded Heart* and Gade's uproarious *Tango jalouse*.

Ma dispatches the pyrotechnics with aplomb in Kreisler's *La gitana*, but there's little of dazzling brilliance.

Ma's sound in this album has a rather lived-in quality, golden allure replaced by gritty articulacy. Physical exertion and goal-driven intensity give way to nonchalant calm. This works in a beautifully sustained 'Louange à l'éternité de Jésus' from Messiaen's famous quartet, but less so in Fauré's sensuous *Après un rêve*: rather than enlarging its scope, he leaves it diminished, despite Kathryn Stott's warm eloquence. *Helen Wallace*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

REISSUES

Reviewed by Julian Haylock

DEBUSSY

Violin Sonata; Sonata for flute, viola and harp; Cello Sonata; Syrinx
Boston Symphony Chamber Players
PentaTone PTC5186 226 (1970)
(hybrid CD/SACD) 46:11 mins

Part of a series aimed at restoring original quadraphonic recordings in modern surround sound, Debussy's haunting neo-classical inspiration sounds utterly ravishing in these pristine transfers.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

KREISLER

Music for violin and piano
Shlomo Mintz (violin), Clifford Benson (piano)
PentaTone PTC5186 228 (1980)
(hybrid CD/SACD) 53:54 mins

Arguably the finest Kreisler collection ever recorded, Mintz's scintillating technique, golden tone and seductive cantabile phrasing makes each miniature gem sound utterly cherishable.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

MOZART

Church Sonatas
Spivakov, Sheinyuk (violin), Turovsky (cello), Dizhur (organ)
Melodiya MEL CD 10 02265 (1974) 66:05 mins

Beguilingly expressive, opulently engineered mid-1970s performances that spill over with energy and charm, gloriously making questions of period authenticity irrelevant.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

SCHUBERT • SCHUMANN

Schubert: String Quintet in C, D956; Schumann: Piano Quintet
LaSalle Quartet, Lynn Harrell (cello), James Levine (piano)
PentaTone PTC5186 227 (1980) (hybrid CD/SACD) 79:07 mins

The La Salle thankfully avoid coffee-house sentimentality in a stirring Beethovenian reading of the Schubert Quintet, although the Schumann might perhaps have been indulged more affectionately.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

INSTRUMENTAL

In his first solo album in five years *Rinaldo Alessandrini* plays Bach; plus *Barry Douglas* captures Brahms's uncompromising character, and *Nicholas McCarthy* plays rare left-hand piano repertory

BBC MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

Elation and anguish

Erik Levi enjoys an inspired combination of Scriabin with Janáček



SCRIABIN • JANÁČEK

Scriabin: Piano Sonatas Nos 4 & 5; Deux poèmes, Op. 32; Vers la flamme, Op. 72; Janáček: On an overgrown path; Piano Sonata
Stephen Hough (piano)
Hyperion CDA 67895 72:39 mins

It would be difficult to find two more dissimilar contemporaries than these two composers. Strongly influenced by Chopin, Liszt and Wagner, Scriabin exploits an unbridled level of sensuality and pushes conventional tonality to its very limits. Janáček is no less impassioned, yet confronts images of foreboding and tragedy in an assertive idiosyncratic language strongly tinged with folk music.

Scriabin's sensuality meets Janáček's images of foreboding

Stephen Hough's juxtaposition of works by both figures in this recital proves to be inspired, not only emphasising the individual strengths of each master, but also reminding us that some of most remarkable music for piano dates from the first 14 years of the 20th century.

Hough has all the bravura needed to surmount the huge technical demands in the fleet *prestissimo* second movement of Scriabin's Fourth Sonata, here despatched with breathtaking lightness of touch. Even more impressive is his account of the Fifth Sonata, which



EMOTIONAL INTENSITY:
Stephen Hough has all the necessary bravura and insight

builds up musical momentum with such lucidity and care for dynamic contrast that there is real a sense of arrival at the final ecstatic climax.

This feeling of elation which characterises the closing passage of the Fifth Sonata, or the final bars of the more harmonically daring *Vers la flamme*, contrasts strongly with the claustrophobic pain and anguish Hough projects throughout the two movements of Janáček's Sonata. After such emotional intensity, it's a relief to turn to the almost childlike simplicity of the first book of *On the overgrown path*. Here Hough isn't

quite as effective as Marc-André Hamelin (also on Hyperion) in delineating a narrative in the nine pieces that moves inexorably from fragility and innocence to impending doom. Nonetheless, his account of the seventh piece 'Unutterable anguish' is exceptionally moving.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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Hear extracts from this recording and the rest of this month's choices on the **BBC Music Magazine website**
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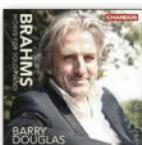
JS BACH

Preludes and Fugues
Rinaldo Alessandrini (harpsichord)
Naïve OP 30564 70:33 mins

Not for Rinaldo Alessandrini another version of the '48' to swell a much-recorded corner of the repertoire. Having established his Bachian credentials with a refreshing rethink of the *Brandenburg Concertos* in 2005, his first solo disc in five years fashions a bespoke collection of preludes and fugues spliced with keen intelligence from sundry movements. Some are instructive teaching aids, others dry runs for a later more elaborate conception, some, indeed, whose attribution is less than solid. A 'divertissement' is how Alessandrini describes the result, though this is to undersell a project that proves thought-provoking in its couplings and in the questions it asks about the relationships between preludes and fugues.

It's also illuminating in the way didactic miniatures blossom into life, and a stylish exemplar demonstrating the art of free-spirited embellishment – a point underlined by the opening C major Prelude, BWV 933, whose repeats are gilded with joyful off-page additions lending added vim and sparkle. Many of the movements make a virtue of brevity: but included are the substantial G major Prelude BWV 902; the much simpler forerunner of the C major Prelude which opens Book 2 of the '48' (paired with its 'official' fugue in a version lacking the imposing coda); and the extended, Albinoni-indebted B minor Fugue, BWV 951. Throughout, an unimpeachable suavity and debonair breeziness informs Alessandrini's playing which is unfailingly sensitive to Bach's 'direction of travel', be it 'galant', learned or songful. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



BRAHMS

Solo piano works, Vol. 5: Paganini Variations, Book 2; Intermezzos Opp. 76/3 & 4, 118/1, 4 & 6; Scherzo in E flat minor; Variations on an Original Theme in D, Op. 21/1; Variations on a Hungarian Song, Op. 21/2; Sarabandes, Wo05 posth.; Hungarian Dances Nos 1, 3 & 5
Barry Douglas (piano)
Chandos CHAN 10878 67:14 mins

Barry Douglas's decision in his Brahms series to mix and match pieces intuitively, rather than employing a strict sequence of genre or chronology, has given this series a pleasing personal slant, and Vol. 5 is no exception. Building the programme around three very different sets of variations, Douglas intersperses the more substantial works with palate-cleansing intermezzos, two little-known early Sarabandes – apparent fugitives from an unfinished Baroque-inspired suite or two – and one of Brahms's not-so-joky scherzos, the rugged Op. 4.

Indeed, if you like your Brahms super-rugged, this CD will not disappoint. Douglas's powerful tone and serious demeanour captures the composer's uncompromising side; yet there's a sense of flow that makes the intermezzos generous and warm without veering towards

BACKGROUND TO...



Johannes Brahms (1833-97)

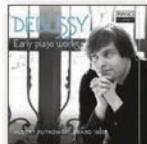
Brahms began his career as a pianist. The vast majority of his works

were written for or involve that instrument, and virtually all his piano music, including both his piano concertos, was composed to perform himself. Brahms was often at his most inventive when writing for the piano. When he was introduced, aged 20, to Robert Schumann, he had already composed three piano sonatas; these prompted Schumann to hail Brahms as Beethoven's successor, describing his talent as 'like Minerva sprung full-armed from the head of Zeus'.

the emotionally indulgent. The *Variations on a Hungarian Song* and the *Hungarian Dances* are served on the bone with sour cream aplenty. But perhaps the centrepiece of the disc and the epitome of its many admirable qualities is a terrifically strong performance of the *Paganini Variations*, Book 2, in which virtuosity serves musical intent at every moment.

Even if some of the works might benefit from a slightly lighter touch – the *Hungarian Dances* are a case in point, but also I wouldn't like to be underneath the piano when that *Scherzo* is going on – Douglas's unfailing richness of tone, his sense of affection for the music and the inventive and enjoyable programming make this disc a treat. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



DEBUSSY

Nocturne; Suite bergamasque; Rêverie; Arabesques Nos 1 & 2; Ballade; Danse bohémienne; Valse romantique; Images oubliées; Sarabande; Mazurka
Hubert Rutkowski (piano)
Piano Classics PCL 0091 69:33 mins

Playing Debussy's early piano music on an 1880 Erard has some justification, in that this would have been the make he played as a Conservatoire student. But although he did play Erards from time to time thereafter, among French pianos he favoured Pleyel. In his very detailed note Hubert Rutkowski notes the contribution of the Erard's 'aliquot' resonating strings, as found also on Debussy's Blüthner, but sadly here, in the louder, fuller passages, this feature – partly due to a close microphone placing – frequently contributes to an unacceptable harmonic jumble. Also the case for any 'historical' piano performance is further weakened by the fact that Debussy always preferred new pianos.

Rutkowski has a splendid technique and the lighter passages can bring a smile to the lips, as with his delightfully crisp ornaments in the second *Arabesque*. But he is too cavalier with the composer's instructions. The first five bars of the *Mazurka*, for example, begin with a staccato quaver in the left hand followed by a quaver rest; how can one justify pedalling through these? Elsewhere *piano* and *pianissimo*

markings are routinely ignored. Listeners should also note that in the three 1894 *Images* the positions of the last two have been interchanged.

Roger Nichols

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★



NICHOLAS MCCARTHY

Solo: works by Bellini, Blumenfeld, Chopin, Einaudi, Gershwin, Liszt, Mascagni, Puccini, Rachmaninov, Scriabin, R Strauss & Wild
Nicholas McCarthy (piano)
Warner 2564605240 74:13 mins

If you want to be a pianist, but you only have one hand, it is probably best to have the left one. The left-hand repertoire is surprisingly strong, in part thanks to Paul Wittgenstein, the pianist who lost his right arm in the First World War and then commissioned left-hand-only concertos and more from Prokofiev, Strauss, Ravel and others. But besides this, through the 19th and early 20th centuries some of the finest virtuoso pianist-composers had sought ways to bolster left-hand technique by creating etudes, arrangements and short concert works for it alone. This provides the one-armed pianist Nicholas McCarthy with more than enough meat for his debut album.

It's an eclectic mix. There is a handful of fine solo works – for instance, Scriabin's *Nocturne* Op. 9 No. 2, Blumenfeld's *Etude* in A flat Op. 36 and a new, very attractive *Nocturne* commissioned from Nigel Hess especially for this recording. McCarthy also tackles some of Godowsky's fiendish rethinks of Chopin Etudes, several arrangements of Italian opera arias, a rather beautiful take on Strauss's song *Morgen* by Jonathan Mann, an opening track by Einaudi and arrangements that he himself has made.

McCarthy offers good, solid, forthright interpretations, especially of the works that appear in their original form. It is an excellent opportunity to celebrate this unusual corner of piano repertoire. But where this CD wins most is in its symbolism: an unlikely candidate for piano stardom overcomes a massive obstacle and fulfils his dream despite everything. That can do more than offer pleasant listening; it can be an example and an inspiration. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

REISSUES

Reviewed by Paul Riley

RAMEAU

Premier livre de pièces de clavecin; Nouvelles suites de pièces de clavecin; La Dauphine
Blandine Rannou (harpsichord)
Alpha 309 (2001) 137:34 mins (2 discs)



Despite an egg-bound 'Pouler' and a laid-back Allemande French harpsichordist

Blandine Rannou's debut solo discs (recorded in Rameau's home town) are full of ear-tugging felicities.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

JS BACH

Partitas Nos 1-6, BWV 825-30
Huguette Dreyfus (harpsichord)
Heritage HTGCD 292-3 (1983) 140:61 mins (2 discs)



There's a 'sleeves rolled up' directness to Huguette Dreyfus's playing that can prove a little unyielding – a quality mirrored in the timbre of the William Dowd harpsichord – but her integrity remains sovereign.

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

JS BACH

Cello Suites Nos 1-6
Bruno Cocset (cello)
Alpha 301 (2001) 128:20 mins (2 discs)



Bruno Cocset deploys no fewer than four cellos to characterise the suites in breezy, dance-driven readings refreshingly free from reverential gravitas; the recorded sound, however, is upfront and sometimes alarmingly personal.

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

JS BACH

Goldberg Variations; Goldberg Canons, BWV 1087; Two folksongs – 'Die Wasserrüben und der Kohl', 'Ich bin so lang nicht bei dir gewest'
Céline Frisch (harpsichord);
Café Zimmermann;
Dominique Visse (countertenor)
Alpha 303 (2000) 102:20 mins (2 discs)



A conspicuously buoyant, adroitly paced traversal of the *Goldberg*s is gilded with lustily executed accounts of two of the Quodlibet's raucous songs, and related canons elegantly realised by strings alone.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

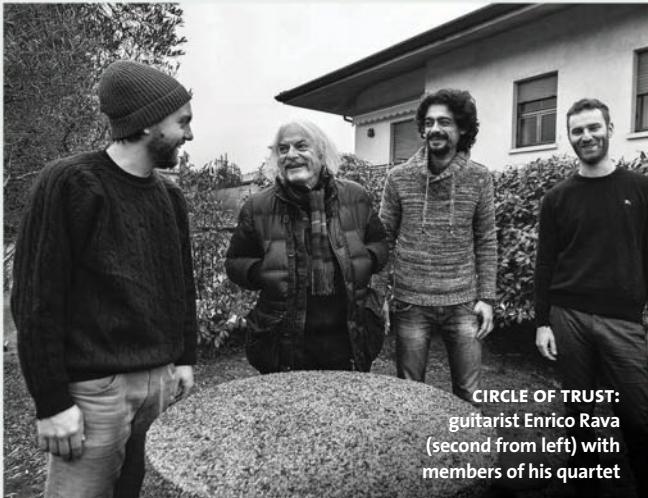
JAZZ

Guitarist *John Scofield* joins with Blue Note heavyweights; *Sons of Kemet* blend Caribbean and Arabic influences; plus a wide survey of *Sun Ra*

MUSIC JAZZ CHOICE

Italian master

Barry Witherden delights in a new ECM release from the Enrico Rava Quartet



ENRICO RAVA QUARTET

Wild Dance

Enrico Rava (trumpet), Francesco Diodati (guitar), Gabriele Evangelista (double bass), Enrico Morello (drums), plus Gianluca Petrella (trombone)
ECM 473 2228 67 mins

Enrico Rava has cut many gorgeous albums. This ranks very highly among them. Bar one collective improvisation, trumpeter Rava composed all the tracks, demonstrating command of a considerable range of moods and forms. The playing is often sensitive

and delicate yet emotionally full-bodied, and when the band cuts loose it's powerfully direct.

Trombonist Gianluca Petrella, the fifth member of the quartet on this occasion, has worked fruitfully with Rava before and he integrates superbly, working in unison with Rava's trumpet to fine effect. Some of Diodati's solos take the music into different areas, but without clashing. Again, Rava nails it, explaining that he likes guitarists because they can't play ten-fingered chords and that Diodati opens up spaces rather than filling them, a lesson many guitarists should learn. Gabriele Evangelista's strong, supple bass and Morello's nimble, constructive percussion complete a superb outfit.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Hear an excerpt of this recording at www.classical-music.com



JOHN SCOFIELD

Past Present

John Scofield (guitar), Joe Lovano (tenor saxophone), Larry Grenadier (double bass), Bill Stewart (drums)
Impulse 474 8510 52 mins

Possibly titled *Past Present* because 'Sco' (John Scofield) called up his old Blue Note label mates, tenorist Joe Lovano and drummer Bill Stewart for this date, the material here reveals a reflective side to one of jazz music's great guitarists. An influential sideman to later era Miles Davis, Scofield's blues-based playing usually emphasises the groove.

Here, in studied unison with Lovano's restrained but muscular playing, his famous Gibson guitar is put to a little more subtle use. The fat, glowing sound is still in place – Jim Hall meets BB King – and judicious squeezes on the distorting Chorus pedal are familiar, but Scofield goes deeper and sometimes more sombrely than usual. He has much to reflect on – notably the death of his son, which inspired some of these new, stay in the mind, melodies. But there's still a forward-looking whimsy in the music that's altogether an understated and unalloyed pleasure. *Garry Booth*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



SONS OF KEMET

Lest We Forget What We Came Here To Do

Shabaka Hutchings (sax), Tom Skinner (drums), Seb Rochford (drums)
Naim cd217 54 mins

Group leader Hutchings has described *Lest We Forget* as 'a meditation on the Caribbean Diaspora in Britain'.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Alongside the Caribbean elements there are hints of Arabic rhythms. But for me the overall effect, thanks to the Sons' use of tuba and two drummers and their strutting spring-heeled rhythms, evokes revivalist New Orleans marching bands like the Dirty Dozen Brass Band and the Rebirth Brass Band. These incorporate more modern influences such as R'n'B and funk. Out front, Hutchings takes care of post-free-jazz business with some acerbic virtuosity over the driving tuba riffs and complex percussion patterns. Maybe a tad more variety would have been good, but it all adds up to an exciting, danceable, exhilarating album. It's a set that can also be thought-provoking once you know the background to some of the compositions, including one inspired by a novel presenting a futuristic vision the band considers close enough to normality to be unsettling. *Barry Witherden*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



SUN RA & HIS ARKESTRA

To Those of Earth... And Other Worlds

Sun Ra Arkestra/Sun Ra
Strut STRUT125CD/LP 133 mins (2 discs)

Purists can object to curated albums like this one, but the playlist-like compilations assembled by the likes of Snowboy and, in this and several other cases, the esteemed DJ and radio presenter Gilles Peterson, can provide invaluable introductions to and usefully condensed expositions of niche areas within jazz. Sun Ra's music is effectively a niche in itself, albeit a huge one, so until someone assembles a complete edition – it has to happen – this two-disc set based around Peterson's own selections from Ra's 125-album discography (simply arriving at some sort of total is an achievement) is very nice to have.

The sound quality is understandably variable given the diverse sources of the material, but the unsanitised results are wonderful, raw draughts of Arkestral atmosphere. The three available formats – CD, LP and download – contain different packages of mixes and accompanying notes, so check on the Strut website, www.strut-records.com, for your preferred version. *Roger Thomas*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BOOKS

An eloquent history of English church music explores this vibrant, living culture; plus a fascinating conspectus of 15 classical music traditions around the world visits Japan, India, Java, China and many more

BBC MUSIC BOOKS CHOICE

Not just for Christmas...

Andrew Stewart admires a cultural history of English church choirs



O SING UNTO THE LORD: *A History of English Church Music*

Andrew Gant

Profile Books

ISBN 9781781252475 454pp (hb)

Ideas about national identity have flourished in the wake of Scotland's independence referendum. Andrew Gant's rich history of English church music joins the debate with what he calls the 'biography of a tradition'. *O Sing unto the Lord* is 'a book about people and a story of England'. At times his choice of people stretches the essential definition of 'English' to breaking point: James MacMillan

and Eric Whitacre, a Catholic Scot and an incorrigibly upbeat American, make the cut, while Judith Bingham, one of England's finest living composers of sacred music, is overlooked. The book's appeal, however, lies in its enormous company of native Englishmen,

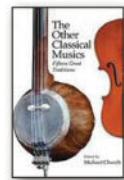
Andrew Gant describes religious battles with eloquent authority

many of them mustered here from the ranks of scholarly footnotes.

Gant conveys genuine love for his subject while showing an equally genuine English restraint. At his best, notably the chapters on the Reformation and the Victorian renewal of church music, he crosses an oceanic territory of music and musicians, radicals and conservatives, philosophers and

pedants, describing individual works and religious battles with eloquent authority. He captures the breezy energy of parish church music-making, underlining its importance to his story, while digging deep into the often ornate repertoire of cathedral and collegiate choirs. William Tans'ur's *The Royal Melody Compleat* (1754), for instance, receives as much attention as the Chapel Royal anthems of Clarke and Croft.

O Sing unto the Lord encourages readers to explore the sound and spiritual power of buried church treasures, including the innovative anthems of Edmund Hooper and joyful sounds of Key's *Jubilate*. The discernment and humour in Gant's prose, although occasionally wounded by colloquialisms, are harnessed to a generous compassion for the life and work of English musicians, past and present. ★★★★



THE OTHER CLASSICAL MUSICS

Ed. Michael Church

Boydell Press

ISBN 9781843837268 426pp (hb)

As we learn in the preface to this fascinating study of 'classical' musical traditions from around the globe, the practice of cross-cultural musical analysis has ancient and esteemed roots. From medieval Arab musical theorists to 17th-century Moldavian polymaths, musicologists across the world have long studied musics beyond their 'indigenous' traditions, with rich and fruitful results.

Beautifully produced and laden with colour images, the book sees 15 acclaimed contemporary musical scholars (mostly ethnomusicologist professors) introduce a particular 'classical' tradition from around the world, with accessible essays on musical forms from Iran to South India, Java to West Africa. What constitutes the 'classical' is of course contentious and discussed with suitable nuance in Michael Church's introduction, where the term is essentially defined as what 'every society regards as its own Great Tradition'. Church's stated acceptance of a 'classical/folk-popular divide' on this front might be a touch prickly for some readers, but the choice of musics themselves attests to a more democratic vision, including North American Jazz in this new global canon.

The vastly varying scope of the 15 different essays also raises some questions: on the one hand is Neil Sorrell's excellent discussion of the music of Java (a single Indonesian island), while Ivan Hewett must account for the whole of Europe (a challenge he nonetheless takes on most admirably). This at times dizzying breadth is however tempered by the evocative 'field notes'-style introduction with which each essay opens. From an account of a father and son's playful interaction during a North Indian sitar improvisation, to a description of an impromptu *makam* singing session at a Turkish dinner party, these lively snapshots transcend the more thorny labels of 'great' and 'classical' to provide a window into the living, breathing soul of music-making in all its glorious, messy specificity.

Kate Wakeling ★★★★

AUDIO GIFT GUIDE

BBC Music Magazine's resident audio expert *Michael Brook* turns his ear to a selection of the best hi-fi kit for your Christmas wish-list



SOUND IDEAS: (clockwise from above) Astell & Kern AK Junior, VPI Nomad, Ruark Osborne & Little R1 Mk 3 and Monitor Audio SoundFrames



HIGH-RESOLUTION MUSIC PLAYER

Astell & Kern AK JR £399

High-resolution audio has been bubbling up over the past couple of years and, if you're thinking of taking the plunge, it makes sense to invest in a player that can actually process the files to make sure you're getting the highest of high-resolution audio. Paired with a set of studio-quality headphones, Astell & Kern's AK Junior (top, left) is a solid investment. A fraction of the cost of A&K's top-of-the-range players, it copes admirably with hi-res audio, looks the part and will make your smartphone sound like a fly in a tin can.

www.astellnkern.com

HIGH-END TURNTABLE

VPI Nomad £999

VPI's Nomad is a US-made, high-end turntable that's equally at home plugged into a powerful home system as it is kicking back with a pair of headphones plugged directly into it – it'll sound great either way. The Nomad (top, right) has been built with both turntable novices and vinyl veterans in mind and, to that end, comes with a virtually unbreakable tone arm and tank-like build quality that belie its minimalist, attractive looks. Built in sleek silver and black, it has unobtrusive controls. Sonically, it measures up brilliantly too.

www.renaissanceaudio.co.uk

DIGITAL RADIO

Ruark Osborne & Little R1 Mk 3 £200

Cramming in DAB, DAB+ and FM tuners, not to mention Bluetooth connectivity, the R1 Mk 3 (above, right) digital radio is a do-it-all box of musical tricks. Ruark has tweaked its RotoDial control, making it even easier to access all of the R1's features without cluttering the fascia with buttons. A USB charging port will keep your tablet or smartphone topped up as you stream music and if you want to make it truly portable, the R1's battery pack gives it life beyond the end of an electrical cord.

www.ruarkaudio.com

ULTRA-SLIM PICTURE SPEAKERS

Monitor Audio SoundFrame £225 per speaker

The Monitor Audio SoundFrame range (above, left) is a bit different to your average loudspeaker. Instead of taking up valuable living room space with bulky cabinets, the SoundFrame speakers hang on your wall like pictures. These can be matched to your room's decor with a range of grilles that can have pre-printed artwork or your own designs. You can also select your own colour for the frames, or opt for white or gloss black. This flexibility of style combines with a good audio performance.

www.monitoraudio.co.uk

LIVE CHOICE

20 UNMISSABLE EVENTS FOR CHRISTMAS 2015

Our pick of the best Christmas concerts and operas, plus a guide to Messiaen's *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus*

 For detailed concert listings visit www.classical-music.com/whats-on

1 SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh, 3 December

Tel: +44 (0)131 668 2019

Web: www.sco.org.uk

The Scottish Chamber Orchestra likes to see in the New Year with a Viennese celebration, but the countdown begins in Greyfriars Kirk where choristers from St Mary's Cathedral join the orchestra's own chorus under Gregory Batsleer for the young Britten's choral variations *A Boy was Born*. There are Christmas motets, too, by Praetorius and JS Bach's *Komm, Jesu, Komm*.

2 ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC

Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, 3 & 4 December

Tel: +44 (0)151 709 3789

Web: www.liverpoolphil.com

The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra doesn't do Christmas by halves, what with

five concerts under Ian Tracey following a festive salute to Tinseltown fronted by jazz singer Claire Martin. But Vasily Petrenko gets in first with excerpts from the fairytale twosome of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and Prokofiev's *Cinderella*. The last act of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* ensures there won't be a dry eye in the house.

3 YORK EARLY MUSIC CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

York, 4-12 December

Tel: +44 (0)1904 658338

Web: www.ncem.co.uk

York's annual yuletide festival is full of good cheer. While a four-nations concerto competition takes place between England, France, Germany and Italy (refereed by Les Contre-Sujets), the B'Rock Orchestra (above) embarks on a European jaunt, taking in Purcell, Charpentier and Arvo Pärt. L'Arcadia eyes up the competition for JS Bach's Leipzig



post and the Courtiers of Grace take a look at the music that was used to celebrate Christmas in Martin Luther's home in 1538. Ex Cathedra returns to York, exploring Elizabethan works by Tallis, Byrd and Gibbons.

4 SPITALFIELDS WINTER FESTIVAL

Spitalfields, London, 4-15 December

Tel +44 (0)20 7377 1362

Web: www.spitalfieldsmusic.org.uk

A conductor-less Solomon's Knot presents two thirds of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* to round off a festival that samples the Baltics and Nordic countries, courtesy of the Choir of Royal Holloway. Meanwhile, Les Arts Florissants turns the pages of Monteverdi's first three books of madrigals, the Riot Ensemble charts the relationship between Zivković and JS Bach, and a pop-up rocking chair creates sounds that react to movement.

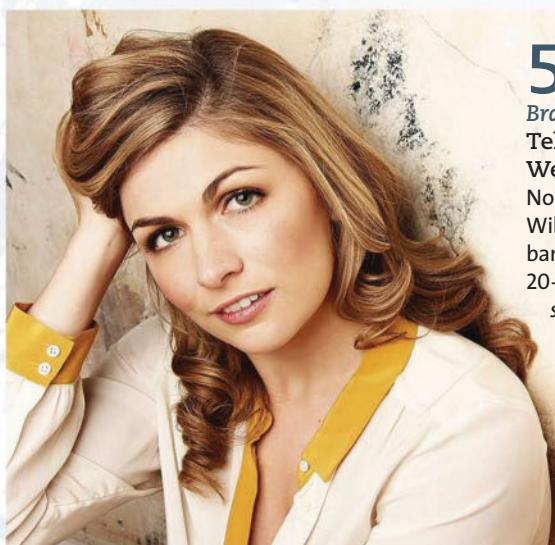
6 CHRISTMAS AT KINGS PLACE

Kings Place, London, 6-31 December

Tel: +44 (0)20 7520 1490

Web: www.kingsplace.co.uk

Actors Edward Fox and Patricia Hodge are among those game enough to grapple with a movement from Schumann's *Album für*



5 CORDELIA WILLIAMS

Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford on Avon, 5 December

Tel: +44 (0)1225 860100

Web: www.wiltshiremusic.org.uk

No one could accuse pianist Cordelia Williams of leaping on the Christmas bandwagon. Messiaen's great 20-movement piano epic *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* (see box, opposite) has been at the centre of her year-long multimedia project that includes words and imagery. It comes full circle reuniting Williams with poet Michael Symmons Roberts and painter Sophie Hacker.



die Jugend at the gala launch to Kings Place's Yuletide extravaganza. Tenebrae subsequently opts for 'A Very English Christmas', while the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment proposes a Viennese New Year's Eve – with a twist.

7 THE MARIAN CONSORT

Keble College Chapel, Oxford, 8 December

Tel: +44 (0)1865 244806

Web: www.musicatoxford.com

Showcasing Jean Mouton's *Quaeramus cum pastoribus*, an influential Sistine Chapel favourite for over a century, Rory McCleery's Marian Consort revisits the story of the Nativity from the perspective of the shepherds. The work's legacy is traced through Cristóbal de Morales's Mass based on the motet together with an eight-part setting by Stabile and works by Tomás Luis de Victoria.

8 PHILHARMONIA

Royal Festival Hall, London, 10 December

Tel: 0844 875 0073 (UK only)

Web: www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Under conductor Jérémie Rhorer the Philharmonia is off to the ballet for excerpts from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and Delibes's

Coppélia. There's also a Christmas strand with music from Berlioz's 'sacred trilogy' *L'enfance du Christ*. And violinist James Ehnes cranks up the thermostat with a rare chance to hear Lalo's Violin Concerto, Op. 20.

9 ULSTER ORCHESTRA

Waterfront Hall, Belfast,

11 & 12 December

Tel: +44 (0)28 9033 4455

Web: www.ulsterorchestra.com

Although his experience spans the Philadelphia and Cleveland orchestras, the Bayerische Staatsoper and Netherlands Opera, Matthew Halls cut his teeth as harpsichordist with period instrument ensembles such as Les Arts Florissants and Amsterdam Baroque. This makes him ideal for the Ulster Orchestra's traditional December Handel *Messiah*. The soloists include soprano Sarah Tynan and bass Jonathan Lemalu.

10 ST JOHN'S CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

St John's Smith Square, London,

11-23 December

Tel: +44 (0)20 7222 1061

Web: www.sjss.org.uk

There are wedding bells as well as festive chimes as the Festival at St John's Smith Square ▶

QUICK GUIDE TO...

MESSIAEN'S VINGT REGARDS SUR L'ENFANT-JÉSUS



VISIONARIES:
Messiaen with his wife
Yvonne Loriod in 1964

Five essential facts about a work being performed this month

■ The *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* ('Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus') is a two-hour suite of pieces for solo piano composed by the French composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) specially for his wife, the pianist Yvonne Loriod. It is now considered to be one of the most outstanding piano works of the 20th century.

■ The work was written during the 1944 German occupation of France when Messiaen's home, in Paris, was surrounded by intense fighting. It initially came about after the composer was approached to write music to accompany the poetry of Maurice Toesca on the radio but the project took on a life of its own.

■ A number of symbolic musical motives appear through the work, creating a level of cyclical. The most important is the Thème de Dieu (Theme of God) that is first heard in the very slow No. 1 *Regard du Père* and which returns to prominence every five movements, representing different aspects of the Holy Trinity. Other cyclic themes include the Thème de l'étoile et de la Croix (Theme of the Star and of the Cross) which marks the beginning and end of Christ's life and Thème d'amour (Theme of Love) which was later used in the *Turangalila Symphony*.

■ The score is finely detailed with Messiaen's own markings of tempo and articulation but there is still a wide scope for interpretation and variation. Messiaen was fascinated with birdsong and uses it to great melodic effect in this work. In No. 8 *Regard des hauteurs* (Gaze of the Heights) he includes the songs of the lark, nightingale and blackbird.

■ Other than Loriod's own recording, one of the finest is by pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard who studied under her and Messiaen.

turns 30. And it wouldn't be Christmas without Polyphony's now obligatory Handel *Messiah*. But en route, Chapelle du Roi samples music for the marriage of Mary Tudor and Philip of Spain, Solomon's Knot unwraps Christmas in JS Bach's Leipzig, and Siglo de Oro makes its St John's debut with vocal music old and new.

11 BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA OF WALES

Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff, 11 December
Tel: 0800 052 1812 (UK only)
Web: www.bbc.co.uk/bbcnow
Wales's flagship orchestra isn't to be denied its customary Handel *Messiah* (duly delivered in St David's Hall on 8 December), but a matinee 'Christmas with Gershwin & Ellington' encourages collars to be loosened. Duke Ellington's *Three Black Kings* and his respray of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* share the programme with Gershwin's *Piano Concerto*, with soloist Joseph Moog. Thomas Søndergård conducts.

12 OSJ VOICES

Dorchester Abbey, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, 12 December
Tel: +44 (0)1865 305305
Web: www.osj.org.uk
There's a double helping of good cheer for OSJ Voices, the Orchestra of St John's choir, as it celebrates not only Christmas but also its own 21st anniversary. The centrepiece of the concert is a performance of Britten's cantata *St Nicolas*, and, alongside music by Walton and Vaughan Williams, there's the premiere of a new piece by the evening's conductor, ex-King's Singer Jeremy Jackman.

13 OPERA NORTH

Town Hall, Dewsbury, Kirklees, West Yorkshire, 17 December
Tel: +44 (0)1924 324501
Web: www.operanorth.co.uk
If Christmas is all about children, Opera North isn't going to forget it any time soon. The Dewsbury concert – bringing together the Company's chorus, orchestra, youth chorus and children's chorus – has become something of a seasonal fixture. In addition to the usual festive favourites, Martin Pickard also conducts music from Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden*.

14 JOGLARESA

Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge, 18 December
Tel: 0333 666 3366 (UK only)
Web: www.joglaresa.com
They might have been styled the 'rough trade' of the early music world but the fiddle, harp, bells, bagpipes and voices of Joglaresa have always prized exuberance and spontaneity. Joglaresa's festive 'Sing We Yule' is a touring musical celebration, drawing on Celtic Christmas fare from the fringes of Europe including lullabies, dance music and wassails.



CHORAL PILGRIMS:
The Sixteen journey through
centuries of music (Choice 17)

15 BBC SINGERS

Milton Court Theatre, London, 18 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7638 8891
Web: www.barbican.org.uk
While Welsh National Opera has been dusting down its Charles Dickens (see Choice 16), the BBC Singers, conductor David Hill and Onyx Brass have Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas In Wales* in their sights. This interpretation includes music that mixes Poulenc and Gabrieli with toe-tapping popular festive songs and traditional music from Ukraine and Wales.

16 WELSH NATIONAL OPERA

Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, 18 & 20 December
Tel: +44 (0)29 2063 6464
Web: www.wmc.org.uk
Next summer Welsh National Opera unveils *In Parenthesis*, a new opera by Iain Bell. First comes a timely prelude: his operatic adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*, premiered in Houston last year. Based on Charles Dickens's own one-man performances of the novella, and directed by Polly Graham, it features tenor Mark Le Brocq as narrator and James Southall conducts the 15-piece chamber orchestra.

17 THE SIXTEEN

Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden, Essex, 20 December
Tel: 0845 548 7650 (UK only)
Web: www.saffronhall.com
'The Virgin Mother and Child' is the subject of The Sixteen's (above) eight-concert mini 'choral pilgrimage', and it makes for a wide-ranging meditation that journeys through plainsong and the Gloria from Tallis's sumptuous seven-part *Missa Puer natus est nobis* to James MacMillan's *O Radiant Dawn* and John Tavener's *The Lamb*.

18 ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC

Barbican, London, 22 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7638 8891
Web: www.barbican.org.uk
Across the country there are several truncated performances of JS Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, but Richard Egarr isn't a music director given to short measures. His Academy of Ancient Music forces square up to the full Christmas Day-to-Epiphany plenitude of JS Bach's 1734 six-cantata cycle. James Gilchrist is the Evangelist at the head of a fine solo team.

19 ENSEMBLE CORRESPONDANCES

Wigmore Hall, London, 23 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7935 2141
Web: www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
Hot on the heels of Exaudi's Schütz three nights earlier, Wigmore Hall invites Sébastien Daucé's Lyon-based ensemble to demonstrate that there's more to Charpentier's Christmas output than the celebrated *Messe de Minuit*. Traditional 17th-century music and Noëls are followed by a seasonal *Pastorale sur la naissance de notre Seigneur Jésus Christ* and the heartfelt *Litanies de la Vierge* composed for the House of Guise.

20 CHRISTMAS FROM SWEDEN

Cadogan Hall, London, 23 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7730 4500
Web: www.cadoganhall.com
In Sweden the major festive celebration is focused on 24 December and the 23rd – Lillejulaföft ('Little Christmas Eve') – is a time of mounting excitement. Sharing the Scandinavian anticipation are soprano Miah Persson and the strings of Camerata Nordica under Terje Tønnesen. The programme mixes seasonal favourites from Sweden and England.

RADIO & TV

THE 12 BEST CHRISTMAS PROGRAMMES

This issue we pick the classical music highlights of the festive season. Full listings return next month

For weekly broadcast highlights visit www.classical-music.com

1 ST JOHN'S COLLEGE ADVENT SERVICE

The St John's College, Cambridge Advent Service is a perfect start to the Christmas season. This year Andrew Nethsingha's choir performs works by Herbert Howells and Peter Warlock alongside a new commission, *The Birth of Speech*, by Tim Watts.

Radio 3; *Choral Evensong*; 29 November; 3pm

2 HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Handel's 1741 oratorio *Messiah* is high on many people's Christmas concert schedule. Countertenor Iestyn Davies is among the starry soloists appearing at Cardiff's St David's Hall with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales under Laurence Equilbey.

Radio 3; *Live in Concert*; 8 December; 7.30pm

3 SPITALFIELDS WINTER FESTIVAL

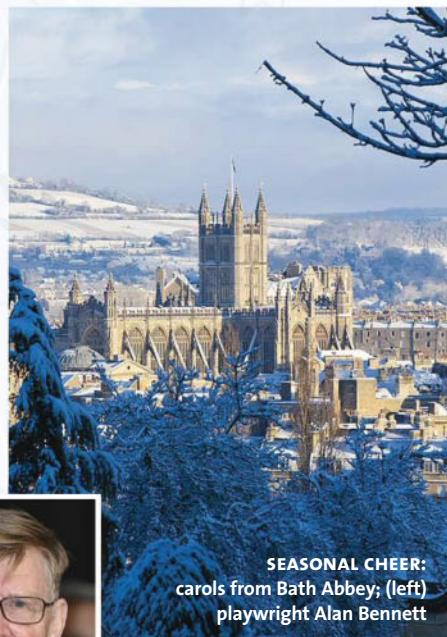
At Christ Church, Spitalfields, Harry Bicket and the English Concert are shedding light on 17th-century settings of the Nativity, including Charpentier's beautifully restrained *In nativitatem Domini nostri Iesu Christi canticum* and a sublime cantata, *Ah! Troppo è ver* by Stradella.

Radio 3; *Live in Concert*; 10 December; 7.30pm

4 THREE PÄRTS BACH

Radio 3 catches the Scottish Ensemble as its Scottish Pilgrimage arrives at Edinburgh's Greyfriars Kirk. The programme includes period instrument performances of JS Bach, alongside pieces by Arvo Pärt and Sofia Gubaidulina that pay homage to the great Baroque master. Matthew Truscott conducts.

Radio 3; *In Concert*; 14 December; 7.30pm



SEASONAL CHEER:
carols from Bath Abbey; (left)
playwright Alan Bennett



5 IN TUNE AT CHRISTMAS

A special *In Tune* is coming live from Broadcasting House's Radio

Theatre, presented by Sean Rafferty. Joining him are violinist Nigel Kennedy and double-bassist Chi-chi Nwanoku with musicians from her Chineke! Foundation. This includes seasonal music and readings.

Radio 3; *In Tune*; 18 December; 4.30pm

6 TEMPLE WINTER FESTIVAL

Roger Sayer conducts the Temple Church Choir and Temple Brass in a Nordic concert that combines settings of carols with a wider span of spiritual and mystical music, including Rautavaara's Persian-influenced *Rubáiyát*.

Radio 3 *Live in Concert*; 18 December; 7.30pm

7 A EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS

On its annual Christmas trip across Europe, Radio 3 drops in on Helsinki for Sibelius's *Five Christmas Songs*, before catching Ryba's *Czech Christmas Mass* in Prague and carols at Dresden's restored Frauenkirche. Radio 3; *Christmas Music Day*; 20 December; from 1pm

8 ALAN BENNETT

Joining Michael Berkeley on *Private Passions* is playwright Alan Bennett (below). Famous for *The History Boys*, his career spans over 50 years. Bach's *St Matthew's Passion* was a choice of his on *Desert Island Discs* in 1967; will it still rank among his favourites? Radio 3; *Private Passions*; 20 December; 12 noon

9 GERSHWIN & ELLINGTON

Join Thomas Søndergård and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales as they raise the rafters of Cardiff's Hoddinott Hall for a swinging celebration including Duke Ellington's jazzy take on Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* and Gershwin's *Piano Concerto*. Joseph Moog is the soloist in the latter. *Afternoon on 3*; 11 December; 2pm

10 CAROLS FROM KING'S

For an audience of millions, the annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from King's College chapel marks the start of Christmas. After this year's service, the chapel organ will undergo a £1m refit (p38). BBC Two; *Carols from King's*; Thursday 24 December; time tbc

11 CHRISTMAS DAY EUCHARIST

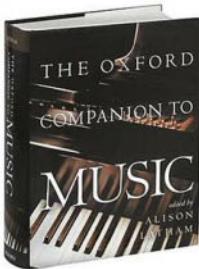
This year it's the turn of Bath to host BBC One's Christmas Day Eucharist, televised live from the city's historic Abbey (left) at 10am. Tune in as the Bath Abbey Choir leads the worship. BBC One; *Christmas Day*; Friday 25 December; 10am

12 LAST NIGHT OF THE PROMS 2015

This New Year's Eve you can relive all the excitement of the Last Night, as Marin Alsop conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Radio 3; *Last Night of the Proms* (rpt); 31 December; 9.15pm

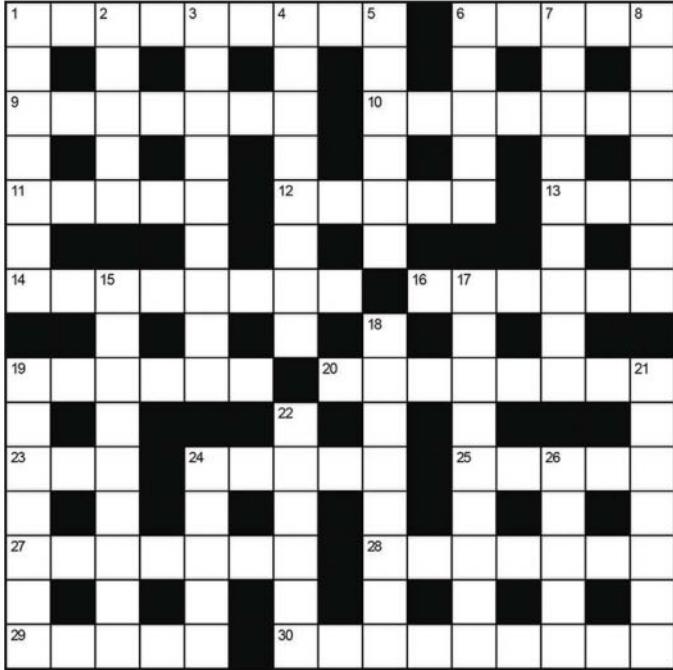
Full Radio 3 listings will return next issue

1. In the Black Minstrel
2. The Charming Little Vienna
3. The Sussex Carol
4. Alice in Royal David's City
5. Oliver Rousseau
6. Sir Nicholas
7. The Tale of Tsar Saltan
8. A music shop
9. The Great Expectations
10. Works by Charles Dickens
11. The Cuning Little
12. The Great
13. The Great
14. Oliver Twist;
15. Nicholas Nickleby; A Tale of
16. Copperfield; Oliver Twist;
17. Two Cities; The Old Curiosity
18. Nicholas Nickleby; A Tale of
19. Alice in Royal David's City
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803. The Great
804. Oliver Twist;
805. Nicholas Nickleby; A Tale of
806. Alice in Royal David's City
807. The Great
808. Oliver Twist;
809. Alice in Royal David's City
810. Works by Charles Dickens
811. Oliver Twist;
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857. The Great
858. Oliver Twist;
859. Alice in Royal David's City
860. Works by Charles Dickens
861. Oliver Twist;
862. Alice in Royal David's City
863. The Great
864. Oliver



Christmas prize crossword No. 289

The first correct solution of our monthly crossword to be picked at random will win a copy of *The Oxford Companion to Music* worth £40 (available at bookstores or www.oup.co.uk). Send your answers to: BBC Music Magazine, Crossword 289, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 18 December (solution in our March 2015 issue). Crossword set by Paul Henderson



Your name & address

ACROSS

1/1d Seasonal work: cathartic mass possibly involving soldier? (9,7)
 6 Well-known couple of pieces of Mendelssohn in fashion (5)
 9 Czech conductor unusually mean about introduction of unexpected couple of names (7)
 10 Sounding arrangement of canons before end of service (7)
 11 Part of cantata really describing region (5)
 12 Feature of Respighi piece showing some urgent revision (5)
 13 Take in rhythm that bass has abandoned (3)
 14 Acknowledged being allowed into concert-hall? (8)
 16 Composer of a 1a/1d caught with gold in bed (6)
 19 Composer of a 1a/1d to spoil bell-sound, mostly (6)
 20 Composer of a 1a/1d, for example, taken in by honourable German (8)
 23 Some of our lieder having a web presence? (3)
 24 Company including radical element in Mass (5)
 25 University piano fixed in dispute (5)
 27 Play with great skill? Just a small amount (7)
 28 A couple of notes in item from opera, Monteverdi opera (7)
 29 Continue overture from Rameau, French article being staged (3,2)
 30 Composer of a 1a/1d runs into blues fan, possibly (9)

DOWN

1 See 1 across
 2 American composer reached higher position around University (5)
 3 Composer of a 1a/1d ruined by trial cast (9)
 4 Performer left after church reveals slight change (8)
 5 Find out former name of carol? (6)
 6 Composer of a 1a/1d providing conclusion in French and almost nothing in American (5)
 7 Men sing excitedly, including an old collection of love lyrics (9)

8 Expected time with Edward - performed together (7)

15 Rock band are mostly accepted by a great number (9)

17 Next cue I messed up, around start of opera performance (9)

18 Composer of a 1a/1d shook badly, almost entirely away (8)

19 Composer of a 1a/1d mother's working for (7)

21 Drumbeats a couple of times interrupting scoundrels (3-4)

22 Long note right to be picked up in echo effect (6)

24 Youngster with a new name for Gershwin

overture (5)

26 Vocalist reduced evidence of excessive heat (5)

OCTOBER SOLUTION NO. 286



OCTOBER WINNER

John Pearce, Budleigh Salterton

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THE MUSIC QUIZ

This month, you'll notice that our quiz tells a bit of a story

1. Famously set by Gustav Holst (1906) and Harold Darke (1911), which chilly carol's words were written by poet Christina Rossetti in 1872?

2. Inspired by a daily comic strip in a Brno newspaper, which 1924 Janáček opera tells the story of a group of forest animals and those who come into contact with them?

3. 'On Christmas night all Christians sing / To hear the news the angels bring' are the opening lines of which carol?

4. With words by Cecil Frances Alexander and music by Henry John Gauntlett, which carol has traditionally opened the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge since 1919?

PICTURE THIS

5. This British composer's (below) works include the colourful fantasy operas *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Higglety Pigglety Pop*. Who is he?



6. Scored for tenor soloist, choir, instrumental ensemble and the audience itself, Britten composed a cantata in 1948 celebrating the life of which eponymous saint?

7. Based on a poem by Alexander Pushkin and premiered in 1900, which Rimsky-Korsakov opera buzzes to the sound of the famous 'Flight of the Bumblebee' in Act III?

8. Sadly now demolished, what sort of building was 10 High St, Worcester, where Elgar lived, and his father worked, from 1865 to 1879?

9. On an organ of two or more manuals (keyboards), what is the name traditionally given to the main one?

10. And now it's time for the fun bit... Taking one word from each of the previous nine answers, can you name the overall theme that runs through this month's quiz?

See p101 for answers

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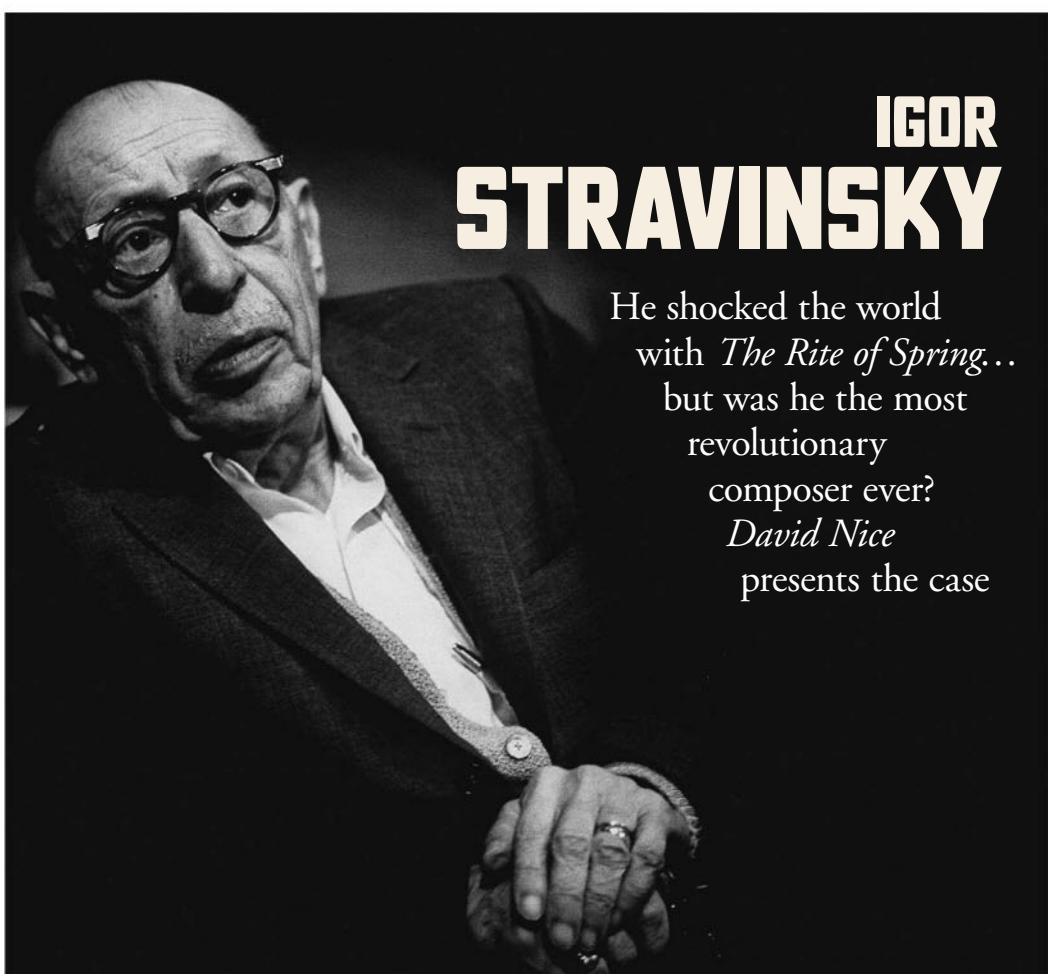


Jan-Dec 2014 37,530

NEXT MONTH in *BBC Music Magazine*

IGOR STRAVINSKY

He shocked the world
with *The Rite of Spring*...
but was he the most
revolutionary
composer ever?
David Nice
presents the case



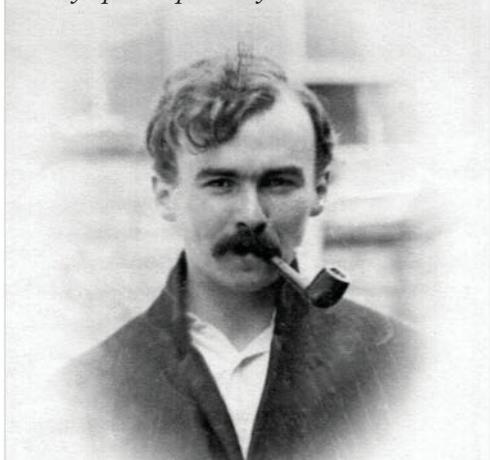
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In 1600, the actor and dancer Will Kemp Morris danced from London to Norwich. We sent the light-footed *Rick Jones* out to retrace his steps

Brahms Horn Trio

Helen Wallace on the best recordings of Brahms's haunting work for horn, violin and piano

Competition terms and conditions Winners will be the senders of the first correct entries drawn at random. All entrants are deemed to have accepted the rules (see opposite) and agreed to be bound by them. The prizes shall be as stated and no cash alternatives will be offered. Competitions are open to UK residents only, except employees of Immediate Media Company Limited, the promoter and their agents. No purchase necessary. Only one entry per competition per person. Proof of postage is not proof of entry. Immediate Media Company Limited accepts no responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post. Entrants agree to take part in any publicity related to these competitions. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Entrants' personal details will not be used by Immediate Media Company Limited, publisher of *BBC Music Magazine*, for any other purpose than for contacting competition winners.

Lucy Crowe soprano

My earliest memories of music are rather eclectic. My mum loved singing and she used to play a record of Handel's *Messiah* all year round, so I grew up singing every chorus: Handel got into my blood, which has served me well. Equally often, she played *Blood Brothers*, the musical by Willy Russell, so I grew up knowing every word of those songs too. Barbara Dickson was on the original recording and I learnt a lot about dramatising music from her. Then I have to mention Abba, because we used to dance to those songs at every family do and they mean a lot to me: we watched *Mamma Mia!* at my hen night and I was gripping my Mum's hand when 'Slipping through my fingers' came on.

I was bullied quite badly at my school, and my solace was to come home and listen to **MARIA CALLAS**'s greatest hits. To hear her singing 'Vissi d'arte' or 'Casta Diva' took the sting out of my problems. I think it was the raw intensity of her voice: I believed her every word. And when you've been kicked by a girl with steel-capped Doc Martens, hearing *Tosca* pouring out her heart as she's on the point of death puts everything into perspective.

I sang in a choir at school and the music teacher introduced me to my wonderful singing teacher, Coral Gould, when I was ten. She took me through to Grade 7, when the examiner happened to be the head of music at St Dunstan's College, and offered me a scholarship. It was such a relief to go to the sixth form there, and to be appreciated by staff and other students. It was there I learnt to sight-sing. We put together a production of **PURCELL**'s *Dido and Aeneas* when I was 17 and toured southern France, playing in a derelict château and a cave. I was Belinda, the role with which I made my Covent Garden debut 13 years later. I fell in love with Baroque music at that point, and discovered that being on stage was where I felt most at home.

When I was at the Royal Academy of Music, I'll never forget hearing a recording of **SCHUBERT** Lieder by tenor Ian Bostridge and pianist Julius Drake. Ian's performances of 'An den Mond' and 'Nacht und Träume' had such a purity and perfection and, perhaps because his is another voice type, he made it



SUBLIME STRAUSS:
'Nothing is more
impassioned than the final
trio in *Der Rosenkavalier*'

LUCY CROWE IS ONE of the world's most in-demand sopranos and she has appeared in numerous recordings. Born in Staffordshire, she trained at the Royal Academy of Music and made her debut as Sophie in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* at Scottish Opera and her Royal Opera House debut as Belinda in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. In February she plays Pamina in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at English National Opera, and in June she performs music by the Bach family at the Barbican, with the Academy of Ancient Music conducted by Reinhard Goebel.

Nelsons. I cannot begin to describe how overwhelming that was: I sat through that last movement with tears flowing. I had recently lost a friend, and it seemed that at that moment her soul was being taken up: I don't believe in God, but at that moment I wanted to.

My last piece must be **RICHARD STRAUSS**'s *Der Rosenkavalier*: I made my debut singing Sophie. Nothing is as beautiful and impassioned as that final trio. That's what I need from music: I would die to sing Puccini's *Butterfly* and *Tosca*. Singing Sophie was such a revelation, and that trio is so heart-wrenching I could hardly sing the final duet as I had a lump in my throat. Since then I had to give myself a talking to: it may be devastating, but you need to get a grip and be a channel for the music! ■

Interview by Helen Wallace

LUCY CROWE MUSIC CHOICE

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Purcell *Dido & Aeneas*
Lynne Dawson, Rosemary Joshua etc; Orchestra of the Age of the Enlightenment/ René Jacobs
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Schubert *Lieder*
Ian Bostridge (tenor), Julius Drake (piano)
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Mahler *Symphony No. 2*
Sinfonie Chor Dresden & Staatskapelle Dresden/ Bernard Haitink
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R Strauss
Der Rosenkavalier
Felicity Lott, Anne Sofie von Otter etc; Vienna Staatsoper/ Carlos Kleiber
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